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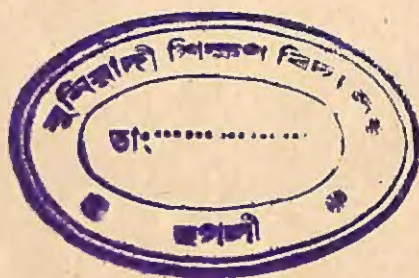
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INDIA THROUGH THE AGES



"Let New India arise Let her arise out of the peasant's cottage grasping the plough, out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from the groves and forests, from hills and mountains Skeletons of the Past, there, before you, are your successors, the India that is to be. Throw those treasure-chests of yours and those jewelled rings among them as soon as you can ; and you—vanish into air, and be seen no more ; only keep your ears open. No sooner will you disappear than you will hear the inaugural shout of Renaissant India, ringing with the voice of a million thunders and reverberating throughout the universe"

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

• INDIA THROUGH THE AGES

7993

By
SWAMI AVYAKTANANDA



MODEL PUBLISHING HOUSE
PUBLISHERS, CALCUTTA

LIBRARY, V. R. MURARI
Date 3.5.2007
Vol. No. 12497

— First Impression printed in London by —
Frowde & Co., 242-244, Old Kent Road, S.E.1.

— Indian Edition printed in Calcutta by —
Sree Kali Press, 65 & 67, Sitaram Ghose Street.

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FOREWORD

The ten Plays, published under the title of *INDIA THROUGH THE AGES*, deal with the salient features of the great cultures that have met on Indian soil. In the formation of an Indian mind, each of these cultures has an important part to play. The Indian mind of the future must be a happy blending of the best ideas and ideals of the great Communities flourishing in the country to-day.

India has to evolve a harmonious culture, and develop a new society by assimilating the best elements of the East and the West. It is desirable that a social revolution should take place in India through consent and understanding. The great faiths and cultures, extant in India, stand for the freedom of the human spirit, and imply a classless and casteless society. If India can evolve a free society peacefully, it will be her great contribution to the world.

The meeting of the different cultures in India is a singular phenomenon in the history of mankind. A composite world-culture is gradually growing throughout the world; and people in other lands will derive much benefit if India can make a cultural experiment on a comprehensive line. These Plays may be of interest to those who are thinking of a cultural federation of mankind.

The future of the world depends on a moral revolution, which can be brought about by harmonising ancient ideals with modern progressive ideas. Progress without moral values will bring confusion and conflict. Spiritual values, detached from social life, will lead us to escapism. Most of the Plays discuss this problem from various standpoints.

Beginning with the idealism of the Upanishads, the Plays touch upon the idealism of the Bhagavad Gita and of Buddhism, discuss the essential principles of the Bene-Israelites, the Christians, the Muslims, the Parsees, the Vaishnavas and the Sikhs. All verses in the Gita can be harmonised without difficulty, if the battle described therein is taken to be a moral battle within man. Buddha is depicted as a radical reformer and a prophet of Universal Love. The shipwreck of the Jews near the western coast of India, the rescue of the seven men and the seven women, and their vision of Elijah, as described

in the traditions of the Bene-Israels, constitute the theme of *THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL*: all characters in it are, however, fictitious. In *THE CROSS IN INDIA*, Appostle Thomas, Lysia and Addai are taken from Christian traditions. The main theme of *THE SACRED FIRE OF LIFE* is in conformity with the Parsee traditions, but all characters are imaginary. Islam in *THE FAKIR'S LIZARD* can be a vital force in the New India. The present Indian situation demands a re-orientation of Sikhism in the light of the teachings of Guru Nanak; this is suggested in *THE DISCIPLES*. India can assimilate all the ideas of personal freedom of the West along her own lines; this has been dealt within the *THE FLUTE OF KRISHNA*. In *ALL-PROPHETS DAY*, the conflicting ideologies of India and the world are presented with a suggestion as to the direction which the revolutionary forces in India should take. As a friend of the different cultures, I have tried to dramatise the strength and the weakness of each of the Communities. I do hope that readers will not take me amiss.

In a sense it is true that *INDIA THROUGH THE AGES* is a collection of ten propaganda Plays. If there is any art in them it must have expressed itself without my knowledge. While writing these Plays, I remembered the three governing principles of art-production, which Tolstoy has set forth: "(1) That the new idea, the content of the work, should be of importance to mankind; (2) that this content should be expressed so clearly that people may understand it; and (3) that which incites the author to work at his production should be an inner need and not an external inducement."

My labour will be amply repaid, if the Plays succeed in making the readers aware of the common spiritual and social purposes underlying the great cultures in India and the world. The achievement of the cultural unity of India can be of world significance. It is time that the new generation should become conscious of it.

I take this opportunity of thanking most cordially my friends who have helped me in the preparation of these Plays. My special gratitude is due to Vyvyan Jenkins, president of the Society for Cultural Fellowship with India, for the great interest she has taken in preparing the manuscript and publishing the book. I am thankful to my esteemed friend, Roy Walker, author of "Wisdom of Gandhi" and "Sword of Gold—a life of Gandhi," for his valuable suggestions.

July, 1947
London

SWAMI AVYAKTANANDA

THE ASHRAMA

About 1500 B.C. An early evening in summer in the Panchala country in ancient India. The courtyard of a famous Ashrama, an educational settlement. The Sage Yajnavalkya, about sixty years of age, is seated on a mat upon a carpet. Leaning on a cushion, he is attentively turning the pages of a palm-leaf manuscript, and thinking. Maitreyi, his wife, sitting nearby, is fanning him. Yajnavalkya wears a white Dhoti, and a piece of white cloth wraps the upper part of his body. Maitreyi wears a white Sari with a coloured border. They have no footwear.

YAJNAVALKYA (*turning to Maitreyi*). The same age-old message in every page, Maitreyi, "Renounce, renounce, renounce; Immortality can be achieved only by Renunciation." I wonder if it is the result of a real perception of Truth, or the effect of a world-weariness due to the tropical heat! What do you think?

MAITREYI. I know very well how you find delight in trifling with the things you love best, my lord. If renunciation is the result of the unbearable heat, then, inspiring thousands of disciples to strive for it, you must have deceived them all.

KATYAYANI, the second wife of Yajnavalkya, calls from outside: "Maitreyi, Maitreyi." She enters.

KATYAYANI. Good news! Dhenu has yielded five seers of milk! She was so peaceful and quiet at her first milking! Samasrava is in high glee, and very eager to show my lord and you the first yield. Here he comes with the milk.

Samasrava, the foremost disciple of Yajnavalkya, enters with an earthen pitcher full of milk.

SAMASRAVA (*placing the pitcher before Yajnavalkya*). Five seers of milk, Master! It seems that Dhenu is going to give a good return for the affection and care with which we have looked after her.

MAITREYI (*rising from her seat, looks into the pitcher*). How exciting! Just in time for our new boys and girls. May the pure milk of the holy cow make us loving to all creatures!

YAJNAVALKYA (*standing up and looking into the pitcher*). May all cows be the symbol of the Eternal!

SAMASRAVA. Dhenu reminds me of the glorious day when ten years ago, at King Janaka's city you gave me the command to drive her mother and the other cows, one thousand in all, to our Ashrama. What a sensational debate it was! No

Brahmin in Aryavarta could surpass you in that momentous debate, and you won the cows !

YAJNAVALKYA. Those days of seeking glory in learning ! Since then I have learnt better. Has not humility been the keynote of my teachings all these years, Samasrava ? (*solemnly after a pause*) I am glad you three are here now. I have something very serious to tell you.

Maitreyi, Katyayani and Samasrava look at one another in perturbation.

YAJNAVALKYA. Amidst the joys of my whole-hearted service to this Ashrama, I have at last heard the call of the Eternal. On the strength of your devotion to me, I seek your help at this turning point of life. Perhaps you have already guessed that in conformity with the Arya tradition, I have decided to renounce the world, and enter the fourth order. Maitreyi and Katyayani, all my possessions are yours. You can divide them among yourselves as you like best. Samasrava, with joy I entrust all my students to you, a worthy teacher. I am sure you three can manage the affairs of the Ashrama quite well after my departure. I leave you in a week's time from to-day. Now, Katyayani, have you anything to say ?

KATYAYANI. It is so sudden, my lord. I do not know what to say. Oh, I feel so sad ! (*pause*) But no—I will not stand in your way. I respect the holy traditions. I promise to help Maitreyi and Samasrava to serve your purpose.

YAJNAVALKYA. I am much relieved. Samasrava, what have you to say, my child ? You know well how I have gradually withdrawn, leaving the work of the Ashrama to you. May your purity and fame spread throughout Aryavarta !

SAMASRAVA. I would have been glad to have a little more time to think it over, Master. (*pause*) To serve you is to serve your cause, and I will not allow my personal feelings to hamper your plan, dear Master. May Brahman give me strength to discharge my duties to you and the Ashrama ! And when the right moment comes, may I gloriously follow in your footsteps !

YAJNAVALKYA. I bless you, my child. (*He touches Samasrava's head with his graceful fingers.*) Now Maitreyi, tell me what you think about my decision.

Maitreyi looks at Yajnavalkya and then bends her head. She looks thoughtful, but does not give any answer.

YAJNAVALKYA. I am sure the courage that you have instilled into the hearts of thousands of our girl-students will not fail you at this critical moment.

MAITREYI. I should like to have a quiet and confidential talk with you, my lord.

Yajnavalkya looks at Katyayani and Samasrava.

KATYAYANI. Come, Samasrava, we will leave them alone for a while.

Yajnavalkya. Katyayani, please use this milk to make the sacred cake, *Ida*. Let the newly-arrived boys and girls share it at the Holy Communion. Let them commune with the Source of all things and imbibe the spirit of the Ashrama. We cannot use *Dhenu's* first milk for a better purpose.

KATYAYANI. Yes, my lord, it shall be as you wish. Come, Samasrava.

Katyayani slowly walks out ; Samasrava follows her with the pitcher of milk.

YAJNAVALKYA. Now we are alone, Maitreyi. Tell me what is in your mind.

MAITREYI. I have been thinking of man's immortal nature of which you have so often taught us, my lord.

YAJNAVALKYA. Yes, Immortality is the essence of my teaching, Maitreyi.

MAITREYI. I am amazed at the love of life in all beings. Day in and day out people die around us, and yet we behave as if we shall never die.

YAJNAVALKYA. This love of life creates attachment to progeny and wealth. It impels people to seek fame. And yet without Immortality as the basis, this love cannot stand for a moment.

MAITREYI (*becoming thoughtful*). My lord, if all the possessions you are leaving behind were mine—if the whole world, full of wealth, belonged to me, tell me, should I achieve the Immortality of which you speak ?

YAJNAVALKYA. No, Maitreyi. Like the stagnant life of the rich would be your life. There is no hope of Immortality through wealth.

MAITREYI. No wealth for me, then, my lord. What should I do with riches which cannot give me Immortality ! (*eagerly*) My lord, my revered teacher, I long to know that for the sake of which you are leaving everything.

YAJNAVALKYA. You have always been my beloved. You are more beloved now by your aspiration. Human love remains unfulfilled, if it does not culminate in a feeling of oneness and identity on a higher plane of consciousness. Come,

let us sit down. (*They sit.*) I am pouring forth to you what I have learnt from Life. Verily, the husband does not love the wife for the sake of the wife, but for the sake of the Self which is in the wife and in the husband. The wife does not love the husband for the sake of the husband, but for the sake of the Self which is in the husband and in the wife. The children are dear to the parents not for the sake of the children, but for the sake of the Self which is in the children and in the parents. Men love wealth not for the sake of wealth, but for the sake of the Self which is in the wealth and in themselves. The worlds and the gods are dear to men not on account of the worlds and the gods, but for the sake of the Self which is in the worlds and in the gods. No one loves any creature for the sake of the creature, but for the sake of the Self which is in the creature. No one loves anything for the sake of the thing, but for the sake of the Self which is in the thing. This Self is Immortality, Maitreyi.

MAITREYI. May you be blessed, my Teacher! Now I realise what love means, and what service is. Now I seem to know the secret of spiritual living. But my lord, I cannot form a clear idea of the Self of which you have just spoken.

YAJNAVALKYA. Maitreyi, Maitreyi, verily, this Self can be seen.

MAITREYI. This Self can be seen?

YAJNAVALKYA. Yes, it can be seen just as I can see you or you can see me.

MAITREYI. How can that be, my lord?

YAJNAVALKYA. By striving, and striving alone. One must hear of Its true nature; one must properly conceive It through one's reason. Then one must contemplate on It. By knowing the Self you know all things. The Self is the source of everything.

MAITREYI. This is wonderful. (*A conch is solemnly blown at a distance.*) The conch proclaims the end of the working period, my lord. Our boys and girls will now be free to prepare for the evening prayer.

YAJNAVALKYA. This conch is the best illustration, Maitreyi. You can gain control over its sounds by controlling it and its blower. All things are the expressions of the Self. You master them by knowing the Self.

MAITREYI (*smiling*). I had never thought that the conch was so instructive.

YAJNAVALKYA. To gain control over the sounds of a lute you must seize the lute and the player of the lute. To gain control over the sounds of a drum, you must have the drum

and its beater under your control. All things in life can be made our own-by knowing the Self underlying them, Maitreyi. All things find their centre in the Self, my beloved.

MAITREYI. How is this, my lord ?

YAJNAVALKYA. See how all waters find their centre in the sea, all touches in the skin, all tastes in the tongue, all smells in the nose, all colours in the eye, all sounds in the ear, all percepts in the mind, all feelings in the heart, all actions in the hands, all movements in the feet and all wisdom in speech.

MAITREYI. It is amazing how all known things find their centre in the unknown !

YAJNAVALKYA. The Self that I speak of is everywhere. It can be felt in everything. The Self is like a lump of salt, dissolved in water. Wherever you taste the water, it is salt. Oh, Maitreyi, from the Great Being, endless, unlimited, consisting of nothing but Truth, the whole universe takes its rise and in the end returns to it. No more is there any knowledge of difference. There is no more death for him who has realised this Truth.

MAITREYI. I feel lost and bewildered, my lord, when you say there is no more any knowledge of difference. Is our individuality a myth, then ?

YAJNAVALKYA. I say nothing bewildering, my beloved. I tell you the culmination of love, wisdom and experience. When there is duality, one sees the other, one smells the other, one hears the other, one salutes the other, one perceives the other, one knows the other. But when the Self only is all this, how can it smell another, see another, hear another, salute another, perceive another or know another ? How, oh beloved, can the knower be known ?

KATYAYANI (*from outside*). Maitreyi, Maitreyi.

Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi pay no attention to the call.

YAJNAVALKYA. One can be the Reality, and yet one cannot know It in the ordinary sense of the term.

MAITREYI. What a sublime message ! May I be equal to it ! The path that you have chosen is also mine. Katyayani is calling, my lord. It is time for our evening prayer.

KATYAYANI (*entering*). I have come to disturb you now, my lord. The Ashrama boys and girls are waiting for you to lead the prayer.

YAJNAVALKYA. Come, let us go.

Maitreyi and Katyayani follow Yajnavalkya as he goes out.

CURTAIN

THE BATTLE WITHIN MAN

About 1000 B.C. Against dense darkness, signifying ignorance and confusion, stands the luminous figure of Gita in the form of a maiden. She is clad in a yellow sari without any coloured border and wears no ornaments. Her head is uncovered and her eyes bespeak dispassion and love.

GITA. I am the song of the Universal Life. I joyfully sing of this all pervading Life becoming man, and of man becoming this limitless Life again. My song commences with the agonising melody of a ceaseless struggle in the human heart, and ends on the solemn note of man's moral victory over all odds. The tonal and atonal movements of my music mingle into a glorious harmony swelling to a crescendo as the flute of the Infinite calls aloud with a maddening charm. No sooner are the chords and discords in my song felt intensely than they become living persons : the Song of Life is transformed into the Drama of Life in which the blind King, the Courtier, the Prince and the Charioteer play their roles. I will go on singing my song until mankind is free and the world is a paradise.

Gita disappears in darkness. After a while there is normal light showing a well-furnished chamber in the palace of King Dhritarashtra. The blind King is leaning on the soft cushions of a decorated couch. His legs are stretched out and his feet, in slippers, are on the edge of the couch. Sanjaya, his courtier, is in front of the King near a window through which he is looking out. The King is in a mood of dissatisfaction.

DHRITARASHTRA (with bitterness). I will not tolerate it any longer, Sanjaya. (He leans forward. Sanjaya turns back and smilingly looks at the King.) You are upsetting me time after time.

SANJAYA. Pardon me, my King. What wrong have I done ?

DHRITARASHTRA. What have you done ! You are disturbing my peace. You make me inquisitive about things in which I have no interest at all. Your remarks create scruples and doubts in my mind.

SANJAYA. I unsettle you only to serve you, my King. I do not like to see you stagnant and dull.

DHRITARASHTRA. There you are ! You contradict my pleasant world of sound, smell, taste and touch. You seem to hint at my blindness in season and out of season. You always suggest that I am missing something. You are jealous of my kingdom, my possessions, my Queen and the Princes.

An enemy in the garb of a friend! Oh, even my Queen is no longer mine! (*He weeps.*) My sons are facing a powerful enemy on the battlefield and she nonchalantly repeats your words, "Where there is virtue, there is victory." Oh, unhappy me! My sons are away, my wife is against me, and here I am left alone—

SANJAYA. I am always with you, my King. (*Sanjaya comes close to the King, kneels down and goes on rubbing his feet.*) You are not alone. Do you not realise that I would have been with the sage Vyasa by now, if I had not a deep affection for you? It is strange how I always feel myself to be a part of you. Anyway, I am not going to leave you, however bitter you may be with me. I am sure you are just throwing off your tensions and anxieties—you are not really angry with me.

DHRITARASHTRA. (*pacified, remains quiet for a while.*) Yes, you have served me well all these years, Sanjaya. (*pause*) You always talk about the sage. They say he gave you a boon so that you can see distant happenings. Is it true?

SANJAYA. May the sage bless you and me! Yes, he has bestowed upon me this power, and it is always at your service. Oh, how I long to see everything deep within and far outside, if only you want me to do so!

DHRITARASHTRA. (*gladdened.*) You are my eyes, Sanjaya. You know how anxious I am for my sons on the battlefield. Tell me how they are faring against their cousins, the wicked Pandavas.

SANJAYA. (*looks out, and amazement dawns on his face.*) My King, I see the battlefield as vividly as I see you!

DHRITARASHTRA. How wonderful! I wish I could have the same power! Sanjaya, tell me, tell me everything happening there.

SANJAYA. Look! Here is Krishna driving Arjuna's chariot—how gracefully and swiftly the white horses are running! See—the chariot is now almost in the middle of the battlefield. Now your eldest son, Duryodhana, is hastily going to Drona, his teacher, to be sure of the first move in the battle. The two armies face each other and wait expectantly. Perfect stillness reigns—a lull before the storm.

All of a sudden the chamber is enveloped in darkness. After a while the sounds of conches, battle-horns and trumpets herald the impending battle. Light reappears and shows the front line of the battlefield. Krishna is seated on the ground with his legs stretched out. Arjuna, in a mood of depression, has laid his head on Krishna's thigh. Krishna is intently looking at Arjuna's face.

ARJUNA. I cannot lift my head, Krishna.

KRISHNA. Have a quiet rest. (*strokes Arjuna's head affectionately*)

ARJUNA. Your touch is as gentle as my mother's!

KRISHNA. A real friend can be father, mother, husband, wife, children—everything, they say.

ARJUNA (*with a sigh*). Freedom! Should I fight to the last for freedom—or should I surrender? To fight—with whom? With things I love best—things which are part of my own being? To fight against life itself? Oh me! To fight against memory which sustains life, hope which prolongs life, desire which unfolds life, cravings which stimulate life? Is it a real quest for freedom? Am I to root out men and things personifying my hopes and desires, Krishna? What will life be like without them? No, I would commit suicide rather than seek a doubtful freedom. Oh, what a battle within me!

KRISHNA. Is it wise, Arjuna, to lean on those whom Nature will one day take away from you? Have you ever lost that which you loved best in life? Have you known the heart of a mother who has just lost her only child? Have you felt the heart of a devoted wife whose husband has just died? Have you known the heart of a bereaved friend? Then, and then alone have you known life. Everything passes away, Arjuna.

ARJUNA. Oh, Krishna, if this is life, why are we given life at all? (*Weeps*)

KRISHNA. To fight and to be free.

ARJUNA (*resting his elbow on Krishna's thigh and keeping his head on the palm of his hand*). To fight and to be free!

KRISHNA (*reproachfully*). It is cowardice and utter selfishness to weep because one is unable to bind persons and things to one's own self. (*solemnly after a pause*) Sometimes I imagine life as a flowing stream and sit on its bank quietly to look at it without seeking anything from it. And once in such a mood I felt as though I were completely different from the stream of life—as though I were Eternal Time, the creator and destroyer of all things. Since then nothing matters to me.

ARJUNA. What an experience! You were Eternal Time! (*Arjuna rises and sits near Krishna. His face is a mixture of hope and sadness.*) Now I realise why some people call you God on earth! Can everyone have such an experience, Krishna?

KRISHNA. Yes, Arjuna.

ARJUNA. How?

KRISHNA. Simply by observing life dispassionately. This is the secret weapon in the Battle of Life. Man can observe with detachment because in his real nature he is an observer. No man can deny this observer in himself. Do you know what our ancients say about this observer?

ARJUNA. What do they say, Krishna?

KRISHNA. They say this observer is man's real Self whom weapons cannot cut, fire cannot burn, water cannot wet, air cannot dry—whom thoughts cannot make moody, feelings cannot make sensitive, cravings cannot stir. The Self is immortal and free. He who knows this Self is a man of steady wisdom.

ARJUNA. What is the description of such a man, Krishna?

KRISHNA. He is desireless and harmless because of his inner sufficiency. He is like a calm ocean in which all waters lose themselves.

ARJUNA. How I would like to feel the presence of such a calm ocean in me!

KRISHNA. Face the realities then and be ready to fight!

(They rise.)

ARJUNA. Oh for the serenity of the calm ocean! No more fight for me—no more any exertion!

KRISHNA. The old illusion again! No one can feel this ocean, Arjuna, without that which the ancients called the Yoga of Action.

ARJUNA. The Yoga of Action for the calm ocean! Krishna, tell me about it.

KRISHNA. I remember Arjuna the sports and merriments of my childhood with the cowherd boys on the bank of the river Jumna. In the rainy season with what wonder I used to watch the game of hide-and-seek which the patches of cloud played with the sun and how I longed to see the sun resplendent and free. To-day I visualise in every human heart the same game of hide-and-seek which the moods of the mind play with the Self. How I long to see the Self in every man resplendent and free! Yoga is our union with this Self—the Universal Life, through our own striving.

ARJUNA. Is not this striving only for one's own sake, Krishna?

KRISHNA. No. Right striving for one's own sake is for the sake of all. How wonderful is the calm solemn ocean unfolding itself through myriads of waves and ripples! How wonderful is the Universal Life manifesting itself through the myriads of forms and beings! The Yoga of Action is for the realisation of the oneness of all forms of life. It is the dedication of one's body and mind to the service of all. How can one remain inactive, Arjuna, if one feels this supreme

Oneness? Will not one's own needs be blended with the needs of all? Will not one's own happiness be the happiness of all? "A Yogi sees the Self in all beings, and all beings in the Self. He judges pleasure and pain everywhere by the same standards as he applies to himself."

ARJUNA. If I once, only once, could realise these manifold forms of the Universal Life—once, only once! Krishna, I am your disciple. Show me the way.

KRISHNA. May the Eternal Life bless you! May you have eyes to see It!

Krishna passes his hands over Arjuna's eyes.

ARJUNA. Oh, I am thrilled! But what is happening to me? (*being restless*) Oh Krishna, what have you done to me? All things are losing their individual features and dissolving into a formless mass! My existence is shaken to its foundation. Krishna, Krishna, where are you leading me? Save me, save me, from this chaos.

KRISHNA. The last struggle of the ego to maintain separateness and distinction! Arjuna, yield not to unmanliness—fight—

ARJUNA (*his eyes are closed and face transfigured*). What a glorious vision! No more I, no more Krishna! All in a golden mass of enlightenment! (*keeps quiet for a time, then kneels down and prays with folded hands*) Thou art the Primal Deity, the Ancient Person. Thou art the supreme refuge of the universe, Thou art the supreme goal. Oh boundless form, salutation to Thee on every side! Oh All, make me All again. (*Arjuna remains in silence. Krishna smiles.*) Krishna, where is Krishna, where am I? (*Krishna passes his hands over Arjuna's eyes again.*) Krishna, my Krishna, my friend Krishna—

KRISHNA. Here I am.

ARJUNA (*opens his eyes*). Here you really are. Are you my Krishna, or are you that which I have just seen?

KRISHNA. I am Krishna, your friend.

ARJUNA. No more can you hide from me. You are my friend, and also you are Eternity.

KRISHNA. Has not everything, every creature this twofold nature, Arjuna?

ARJUNA. Open my heart to realise this, my Lord and teach me devotion.

KRISHNA. "He who hates no creature, and is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from the feeling of 'I and mine', even-minded in pain and pleasure, forbearing, ever content and tranquil is dear to Me. He who is the same to friend and foe, and also in honour and dishonour, who is free

from attachment, to whom censure and praise are equal, who is silent, homeless and steady minded—that devotee is dear to me.”

ARJUNA. I bow down to Thee. (*Arjuna bows down.*) What a world it will be when this is realised by all of us !

KRISHNA. This world will then become the Brindavan in which peacocks and monkeys play together on the branches of the trees, the cows and the snakes embrace one another in the woodlands, turtles kiss the limbs of children bathing in the lakes, and men and women swim without worry in the river Jumna, listening to my flute ; in which lust, greed and anger do not torment people, men and women are free, fearless and harmless, everybody works and nobody is idle ; in which there is no caste or class to humiliate men, no coercion or violence to crush men's aspirations, no privilege or exploitation to check people's free growth. Gods will then live with Gods on this earth. Through all the conflicts which agonise humanity—through all the periodic paroxysms of bloodshed which disturb peaceful living, my liberating process is ever active, and my flute is constantly playing the note of Brindavan. Blessed are those who can consciously join in this process ! Arjuna, can you listen to the call of my flute ?

ARJUNA. By your blessing, Krishna, I can hear the call of your flute. I have won the battle ! Illusions will deceive me no more. Vivid is the memory of my true nature, by your grace. All my doubts are gone and I am firm to do your bidding.

Arjuna kneels down before Krishna, who blesses him by touching his head. The two figures in this position are gradually lost in darkness which continues for a time. Then there is light, and Dhritarashtra and Sanjaya are found in the chamber as before.

SANJAYA. My King, I have faithfully described to you the happenings on the battlefield and the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna. I am myself thrilled by what I have seen and heard. Have I gladdened you, my King, or are you still angry with me ?

DHRITARASHTRA (*jumps up from the couch*). Sanjaya, Sanjaya, what has happened to me ? I feel so happy and free ! No more any burden for me ! Lo, I can see, yes, I can see— ! No more am I blind. I see Krishna, Arjuna and you in me— !

SANJAYA. What a joy it is for me to feel myself in you, and for you to feel yourself in me ! Krishna, Arjuna, you and I are one, and the whole universe is intimately ours.

Dhritarashtra and Sanjaya are lost in intense darkness against which the glowing figure of Gita reappears, and the flute of Krishna is heard.

CURTAIN

TOWARDS BUDDHAHOOD

The sixth century B.C. Midnight. Chhandaka with a small lamp in his hand is standing outside the back door of Prince Siddhartha's palace. He wears a Dhoti, a jacket reaching to his waist, and a turban. His face is sad, and he is expectantly waiting for Prince Siddhartha. Feeling sleepy, he leans his head on the palm of his right hand time and again. The back door opens slowly. Siddhartha, clad in princely attire, looks out, sees Chhandaka and closes the door quietly behind him. Cautiously he comes down the steps to Chhandaka. Chhandaka bends his head in honour, and then raises his head and looks at Siddhartha. They both remain silent for a while.

CHHANDAKA (in a low voice). Cruel Prince—!

SIDDHARTHA (puts his forefinger against his lips). Hush !
(touches Chhandaka's shoulders and says in a low voice) Where are the horses ?

CHHANDAKA. In the woodland away from the palace.

SIDDHARTHA. Are they ready for the journey ?

CHHANDAKA. Not quite, my Prince. I have given them gram to eat. They will take a little time.

SIDDHARTHA. Let us go to the woodland and talk awhile.

Chhandaka leads the way with the dim light in his hand, and Siddhartha follows. In a minute or two they come to the woodland. Chhandaka places the light against a bush so that it may not be seen from outside. Siddhartha sits on the trunk of a tree.

SIDDHARTHA. Come, sit here close to me.

CHHANDAKA. No, my Prince, not on the same level. I am your servant.

SIDDHARTHA. You are my friend, Chhandaka. The Prince in me is dead. Come, sit down here. (Chhandaka sits down.) How is your teacher, the wandering monk ?

CHHANDAKA. He is well.

(They remain silent for a while.)

CHHANDAKA. Change your mind, my Prince. Do not be so unkind. What will you gain by making all of us unhappy ?

SIDDHARTHA. My destiny has called me, Chhandaka. I must listen to the call.

CHHANDAKA. Do not leave us, my Prince. Do not be so cruel to your new-born son and your wife, Princess Jashodhara, the joy of the kingdom. Do not give such a blow to the old King. Oh, what will happen to them to-morrow morning ? The whole palace—the whole kingdom will appear

to them to be a desolate cremation ground. Ah, wretched me ! I am also the cause of their unhappiness in helping you to go. My Prince, why are you so cruelly leaving us ?

SIDDHARTHA. To be in a free atmosphere, Chhandaka, to think more intensely than is possible here.

CHHANDAKA. They say that the sights of illness, old age, death and my teacher, the wandering monk, have created an other-worldly mood in you. Is it not cowardice, my Prince, to take natural happenings so seriously as to spoil your whole life ?

SIDDHARTHA. Those who think like that about me are foolish, Chhandaka. They do not know my heart. Chhandaka, Chhandaka, the eyes of the swan are calling me.

CHHANDAKA. The eyes of the swan ? What do you mean, my Prince ?

SIDDHARTHA. Those grateful affectionate eyes of the swan, dying in agony, pierced by the fatal arrow—I shall never forget in my life. It happened in my boyhood. Devadatta, my cousin, one day discharged an arrow at a flying swan in the garden to the north of this woodland. The swan, struck by the arrow, fell near me. I ran to it, took the arrow out of its body and began to wash it with water from the nearest fountain. It was bleeding profusely. Devadatta came running and said, "The swan is mine. Do not touch it." I replied, "The swan is mine. I am saving its life." A quarrel ensued between us about the possession of the swan. As people gathered round us, the old Minister of State, who was nearby, came to settle the quarrel and decided in my favour. I went to the palace with the swan, and began to nurse it. But it died in three days, in great pain. At the fatal moment it looked at me with loving, tender eyes, full of gratitude. The two eyes, like arrows, pierced my heart, and brought tears to my eyes. As the swan died, I felt as if I had died—yes, Chhandaka, I felt as if I had died. Since then I have not touched the delicious meat dishes of the palace.

CHHANDAKA. You are compassion incarnate, my Prince.

SIDDHARTHA. I cried and cried for the swan, and wondered why I made it so much my own. I wondered at my love for it, and at the death which took it away from me. Since then I have been thinking and thinking about Love, Death, Suffering and Life. When Jashodhara came to me as my life's partner, I saw in her eyes the eyes of the swan, and in the midst of all my happiness I became frightened. I thought, "What will happen to me if she passes away like the swan, or what will happen to her if I am no more ?" The thought made



me restless. Something within me told me that it would be cowardice to cover my wounds with roses. What is Love? What is Death? What is Life? Is there any cure for suffering? This I must find out. I must be myself. I must be alone. So to-night I have made up my mind to be free.

CHHANDAKA. It was the swan's *karma*, my Prince, which brought about its death. It ought not to have upset you so much. We are all subject to our *karma*. Our past *karma* has made us what we are to-day, and our present *karma* will create our future. Each of us is the arbiter of his destiny, my Prince.

SIDDHARTHA. A cheap and cruel theory of the priests and kings to keep the people down! A catch-word of the wealthy and powerful to maintain their privilege! I have thought it over, Chhandaka. Is there anyone who can think, feel and will freely? Are we not all parts of an ever-changing system? A man is to me like a wave in mid-ocean—a wave depending upon millions of waves around it. This universal link between man and man, and men and things, amazes me, Chhandaka. This is how I look at *karma*, and this brings to me a sense of responsibility. I feel that all are intimately related to me. I stand and fall with others. I suffer as long as a single creature suffers in the universe—(pause)—but I must be alone. I am not clear about the details yet.

CHHANDAKA. These ideas are quite different from those which I have heard from my teacher, the wandering monk, who sits under the banyan tree near the stream and gathers common folk around him. He tells us to be God-fearing and—

SIDDHARTHA. God-fearing! I wonder if there is a God! But let it be an open question until I have known Life myself. I am sorry, I have interrupted you. What other things have you heard from the monk?

CHHANDAKA. He says: "Life is evil. In each one of us there is something permanent, which can think, feel and do whatever it likes. Each one of us should seek liberation without caring for the world and living creatures." His teachings have given solace to a large number of people, my Prince.

SIDDHARTHA. To be frank, Chhandaka, the monk really made me angry. He also told me about a permanent "I." I have searched for it in vain until now. I think of this "I" as the flame yonder which is changing every moment with the burning of the wick and oil, and yet looks the same. Life is mysterious. I wonder if anyone can achieve any great thing without caring for others.

CHHANDAKA. You are speaking new things, my Prince. They seem to be true. My heart accepts them but I feel a barrier. Tradition is so strong.

SIDDHARTHA. I know the bitter pain of struggling against tradition, Chhandaka. I cannot accept anything simply because our ancestors or our traditions uphold it. So I am alone, and must seek Truth alone. This revolt against tradition is taking me away from my wife, my child, my kingdom. Hush! I hear the rustling of leaves at a distance (*pause*) and also the sound of footsteps. Hide the lamp at once. Let us go behind the bush.

They hide themselves. Two thieves enter with a box stolen from the palace. They use flints and cotton to light a small lamp.

FIRST THIEF (*breaks open the box in high glee*). Good luck! There will be no more need for stealing for a year or two.

SECOND THIEF (*looks into the box*). The royal family is well served. They took all these from us, the people, and now we have taken them back!

FIRST THIEF. It will be a job to dispose of these precious things though—(*shakes his head*)

SECOND THIEF. Never worry. We will find a way. (*takes a ring from the box*) Here is a diamond ring. It is for my wife. (*takes a gold necklace from the box*) What a nice gold necklace! (*dangles it to and fro*) This is for your wife. The rest of the things—

FIRST THIEF. Be quiet. It is very late. It is not a safe place. Pack up the things. (*They shut the box.*) Come—(*Exeunt*)

Siddhartha and Chhandaka come back.

SIDDHARTHA. This is more revealing than many of the things which have opened my eyes. Am I not wise, Chhandaka, to give up all these ill-earned possessions? Where there is property, there is fear. Where there is property, there is theft. How glorious was the golden age in which there was no property and hence no theft, in which all people were equal and free. I would like it to come again.

CHHANDAKA. Excuse me, my Prince, our scriptures tell us quite different things. Is not property a sacred thing? Did not God Himself create our ancient sage-kings, and our society with classes and castes? Even when I was a child my father told me about the sacredness of our caste and taught me to be a faithful servant of the royal family.

SIDDHARTHA. A time will come Chhandaka, when there will be no king, no priest, no caste and no class in society.

CHHANDAKA. The things that you are telling me to-night will go on puzzling me from to-morrow when you are away. I shall have no one like you to guide me. (*weeps*)

SIDDHARTHA. Be quiet and listen. (*wipes Chhandaka's eyes*) Before I depart, I should like to tell you about the golden age of which I dream. In that age of Truth, the teachings of the Buddhas inspired free men and women: there were no priests. Society knew no privileges, and there were no scriptures to justify them. Consequently there was no caste. The people had no king: they ruled themselves. Men and women shared equally what they produced: there was no class. Women took part in all activities on equal terms with men. Morality was based on natural purity and restraint. Marriage was not an occupation, but a method of purifying men and women through natural affection.

CHHANDAKA. My Prince, it seems that according to you everything I know to be sacred is rotten. Have I been deceived, or, excuse me, have you been deceived?

SIDDHARTHA. Time alone can tell. Anyhow, you know now why I am leaving you all. I do not find anything sacred in kingship, so the sanest way open to me is to forsake it. I do not believe in property, so I must be a beggar. I cannot accept any priestly faith, so I must discover a faith of my own. I am against the tie of the family, so I must be a free man. I vaguely hear the call of Nirvana, the Eternal Calm of the ancient Buddhas. My conviction is that all differences will cease in this Eternal Calm. I feel that the touch of Nirvana alone can make all creatures equal and friendly.

CHHANDAKA. Who were these Buddhas, my Prince?

SIDDHARTHA. Great Saviours, whose lives and teachings are now suppressed by the priests.

CHHANDAKA. I see! (*pause*) Do you believe that the golden age of which you dream will ever come back?

SIDDHARTHA. The artificial environment in which I have lived so long has blurred my vision, Chhandaka. I cannot see the future clearly. I must first of all discover a new way of living which can inspire people. I believe that the future golden age will be brighter than the past one. It will be on a higher level, as it will absorb all the good things that this bad society has unknowingly produced.

CHHANDAKA. What will this golden age be like, my Prince?

SIDDHARTHA. It will be a friendly world in which men and animals will work together for their mutual welfare. Do you

know, Chhandaka, I have an intense feeling that I am at one with animals. I feel as though I have passed hundreds of lives in animal forms, and shared their joys and sorrows. (pause) It is late now, Chhandaka. I am glad to have opened my heart to a worthy friend, and I feel relieved.

CHHANDAKA. May you realise your dream and make the world happy! (sadly bends his head)

SIDDHARTHA. Do not be upset, Chhandaka. I will tell you more on the way. We must go now. Have the horses finished eating?

CHHANDAKA (looks towards the horses). Yonder they are, well-fed and well-groomed, waiting for the journey.

SIDDHARTHA (looks towards the horses). Lovely creatures! Tools in the hands of cunning men! How I would like to see them free! Oh yes, I have something for the horses. (takes two bananas from the pocket of his jacket) Give these to them to eat before we start.

CHHANDAKA. I do your bidding, kind Prince.

Chhandaka goes out with the bananas to the horses. Siddhartha walks solemnly to and fro, and the atmosphere is saturated with his silence and dignity. Chhandaka comes back.

CHHANDAKA. They have eaten the bananas with great delight, my Prince.

SIDDHARTHA. I am glad. (pause) Look after Kantaka, my dear horse, in my absence, Chhandaka. (pause) To-night will be my last ride?

CHHANDAKA. Last ride?

SIDDHARTHA. Yes, last ride. Never again will I ride on any living creature. What right have we men, Chhandaka, on any living creature. What right have we men, Chhandaka, to use these innocent creatures for our selfish purpose? (pause) I will never forget Kantaka's service to me to-night. (looks towards Kantaka) Kantaka, you will share my enlightenment, if I ever attain it. Chhandaka, the hour has struck. (looks at the palace) Farewell my dear abode! Farewell my dear ones! (proceeds towards Kantaka) Kantaka!—

Siddhartha goes to the horses. Chhandaka follows him.

CURTAIN

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.

About 300 B. C. Late morning. The yard of a fisherman's house in the seaside village of Khandalla in Konkon, western India. Under the shade of a tree, on a mattress under a light covering, Susanna is sleeping. Miriam, Susanna's daughter, sitting by the bed, is massaging her mother's hands gently. She has a fan near her with which she is driving away the flies from her mother's face, time and again. Benjamin, Miriam's father, is quietly walking. Orpha enters softly with a packet of medicine in her hand, looks at Susanna and, seeing her asleep, goes to Benjamin.

ORPHA. Here are some pills, Benjamin, for Susanna. She must take one four times a day. The fisherman has just come to the back door. He is taking Amos and me to the village shop. He has made arrangements for our provisions for a week.

BENJAMIN. He is so kind to us! Tell him how grateful I am to him for the medicine, and how grateful we all are for the provisions. What are the others doing?

ORPHA. Rebekah and Serah are cooking. Anna and Judith are weeding in the kitchen garden: the fisherman has asked us not to neglect his garden. Daniel, Tobit and David have gone out to take a walk on the sea-shore.

BENJAMIN. Where are Chilion and Job?

ORPHA. I do not know. Perhaps Miriam knows. (comes to Miriam. Softly, with a smile) Where has Chilion gone, leaving you here—?

MIRIAM. He has gone with Job to the Headman to talk about land for our settlement.

ORPHA (with a smile). I am going with Amos to the shop.

MIRIAM. Good luck!

Orpha leaves.

BENJAMIN (comes to Miriam). How is your mother now?

MIRIAM. She is sleeping.

SUSANNA (moves and opens her eyes). Miriam, dear give me water. I am feeling very thirsty.

Miriam goes to fetch water.

BENJAMIN (stands near his wife). How are you now, Susanna? I have some pills for you. You must take one before you drink.

SUSANNA. I have had a sound sleep and am feeling stronger. Perhaps I may be able to get up soon.

Miriam comes with water in a small earthen pot.

BENJAMIN. Give Susanna a pill to swallow before she drinks.

Miriam takes the pills and gives one to Susanna who swallows it and then drinks.

SUSANNA. What a bright morning, Benjamin!

BENJAMIN. A glorious morning, Susanna.

MIRIAM. A contrast to yesterday morning. What a dreadful thunderstorm it was! I shall never forget the shipwreck and the tussle we had with the waves. Why is God so unkind to us, Father? Are we really His chosen people?

BENJAMIN. God is very kind to us, Miriam. He has saved our lives from the cruel hands of the Greeks who are ravaging Jerusalem now. His kindness came to us yesterday through the fishermen who saved our lives. He was so kind to Susanna when she was rescued from the huge waves. By His grace we have at last a foothold in this new country. The fisherman has lent us his house for a while. All the villagers have helped us with provisions and clothing. The local Guild of Merchants is very sympathetic to us and the Headman is offering us land. Yes, Miriam, God is very kind to us.

SUSANNA. But what about the people of whom we can find no trace? (*pause*) It is a mystery—a mystery to me, Benjamin, this cruelty of nature and cruelty of men! I wonder! Perhaps God is both cruel and kind. (*sighs*)

MIRIAM. I have heard several times from the old Rabbi the story of our race. The idea of a chosen people seems to me unreal and false. I think it is only racial pride. Look at the great famines, the captivities in Egypt and Babylon, the oppressions of the Assyrians, the Persians and the Greeks. Look at the intruder's life we are forced to live wherever we go. Oh what a fate! Why is God so unkind to our race, Father?

SUSANNA. They say we are a greedy and ambitious people who are justly punished by God. But we see around us how greed and ambition go unpunished and make many races prosperous. Do you really believe, Benjamin, that God judges rightly?

Benjamin remains silent.

MIRIAM. Answer, Father.

BENJAMIN. God is kind to us, and his judgment is always correct, Susanna. (*to Miriam*) Do not be frightened by suffering, my child. The Prophet Isaiah says that Israel's suffering is for the salvation of mankind. We must fulfil our destiny.

See how a child vents its impulses and passions on the mother, and how patiently and lovingly she takes them and helps the child in its growth. We are perhaps the people chosen by God to play the part of the mother, to remove through our suffering the wrongs of the world. If Isaiah is right, then ours is a glorious task. It is more honourable and dignified to be the oppressed than to be the oppressor. In God's scheme each race has a part to play. Our role is to follow the prophets and purify ourselves and others through suffering.

SUSANNA. It never struck me like that, Benjamin. You never told me this before. Neither did the old Rabbi mention it.

BENJAMIN. When I was struggling with the waves yesterday, suddenly the saying of Isaiah came to my mind, and since the fishermen rescued us I have been thinking about it.

MIRIAM. What kind of life would it be, Father, in which there is only suffering and no joy at all?

BENJAMIN. One can feel unalloyed joy within oneself in spite of suffering. Joy is the ideal of our race. Has not Solomon said that God can be our friend and we can be His playmates? When we undertake our God-given task and accept God's plan, we are His playmates. God's way is the way of persuasion—not coercion. Sometimes I feel that I should allow the murderer to kill me so that he may be released from his passions and I may know my immortal nature. This is how I understand the sixth commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." If we are all God's children, and moral victory is the goal of life, then certainly hell and sin have been created to give man the joy of victory. Have not our wise men said that if you go to Heaven you will find God there, and if you go to hell you will find Him there, too? Miriam, the wisdom of our Prophets is deep and profound.

ORPHA (*from outside*). Miriam, lovely things from the shop.

MIRIAM. Here come Orpha and Amos.

Orpha and Amos enter with the provisions.

AMOS. It is a beautiful country, Benjamin.

MIRIAM. I never thought you would be back so soon.

ORPHA (*goes to Susanna*). How nice to see you brighter. Have you taken the pill?

SUSANNA. Yes. I am feeling much better.

Orpha and Miriam begin to open the packets of rice, pulses, spices, etc.

MIRIAM. Rebekah, Sarah, come and see the fun—

ORPHA. Anna, Judith, come quickly or we will eat everything.

Rebekah and Sarah enter from one side, and Anna and Judith from the other.

ANNA. Is it another storm?

They all laugh.

ORPHA. The delicious sweets of this beautiful country! (*gives one to each and they all eat. To Miriam*) This is for Chilion, Keep it for him. (*to Rebekah*) This is for Job.

REBEKAH. We never thought yesterday morning that we would be able to eat again!

SARAH. I am going to cook some nice dishes to-night with the spices.

ANNA. These sweets are very fine, Orpha.

JUDITH. Susanna, here is something for you from the garden. (*gives Susanna a bunch of flowers*)

SUSANNA. Thank you, Judith. Orpha, keep some sweets for Daniel, Tobit and David. Oh, I feel so well. Miriam, let me sit up. (*Miriam piles up the pillows, leaning on which Susanna sits. To Anna*) You are working so hard, and I am lying idle here.

ANNA. Never mind. Your turn will come. Come, Judith, let us finish our work in the garden.

Anna and Judith go to the garden.

ORPHA. Let me pack all these things. (*She begins to pack the provisions.*) Raisins, Benjamin, raisins!

BENJAMIN. Splendid! We shall have raisin-juice for our Cup of Blessing.

AMOS. Come, Orpha.

Orpha and Amos take the provisions and go.

REBEKAH. The fishermen have given us a big fish, Susanna. We are cooking it specially for you.

SUSANNA (*pause*). Please do not mind, Rebekah, if I do not take fish. After what I have suffered, I cannot bear to be the cause of suffering. Benjamin has also just mentioned the sixth commandment: "Thou shalt not kill."

SARAH. Do not be silly, Susanna. Fishes cannot feel.

BENJAMIN. Susanna, I agree with you. Sarah, after struggling for my life yesterday, I feel that I cannot take life. It is not whether the fishes can feel or not. It is what God intends us to eat. In the very first chapter of our Holy Book God says that He has made man in His own image and that

He has provided all creatures with green herbs and fruits. His creation is always good. It is we who make it bad.

SARAH. I see. We must follow the Scriptures. We are so few in this new land!

REBEKAH. Yes, it will be good for us if we follow the wisdom of our prophets and eat according to their teachings.

BENJAMIN. The Prophet Isaiah says that killing an ox is as bad as killing a man.

(pause)

REBEKAH. We will discuss the matter together this evening. Let us go to the kitchen, Sarah.

Rebekah and Sarah go.

MIRIAM (*looks towards the entrance*). Here they come—Chilion and Job.

Chilion and Job enter and come to Susanna.

CHILION. It is nice to see you sitting up, Susanna. Good news, Miriam. Listen to Job.

JOB (*to Benjamin*). Benjamin, the Headman is willing to give us land, free of rent, for five years. After that we shall have to pay a small rent to the Village Community. He says that there is great scope for an oil-pressing industry in this part of the country, side by side with the cultivation of land.

BENJAMIN. That is splendid! We will follow our old land system which has been destroyed by the conquerors of the Holy Land. The land will belong to us all, and will be shared by each family according to its needs. It will be graded, and distributed fairly. Every ten years it will be redistributed.

CHILION. The Headman says that he will introduce us to the members of the Village Community. The Merchant is very useful. He has travelled a lot and knows some Hebrew. He was a good interpreter. He says Konkon has a flourishing trade with many countries.

JOB. We can use the merchant as a link with our homeland. We must have our Holy Book from there. In the meantime what can we do, Benjamin?

BENJAMIN (*pause*). We are all common sufferers to-day. I feel I should be frank with you all. Let me tell you a secret. I have some knowledge of the Kabbalah, the Hidden Teachings of the Prophets. The priests and the Rabbis do not speak about them lest the people trifle with them. I am going to share this wisdom with you.

SUSANNA. You have kept it secret from me, Benjamin !

BENJAMIN (*humorously*). Wisdom is greater than the wife, my dear. (*seriously*) The secret knowledge is about man's nature and his destiny. Man has something in him which never dies, but assumes forms time after time. God is without name and form, and yet he has become the whole universe. Man can know God and be free. There is one universal life. One who knows it knows the brotherhood of all creatures. Each letter of our alphabet, has a sacred meaning. By repeating it rightly man make his life divine, and work for the good of all beings.

JOB. I would like to know more about it, Benjamin.

Enter Daniel, Tobit and David, looking sad.

MIRIAM. You have come at last ! It must have been lovely on the sea-shore.

Daniel, Tobit and David go to Susanna.

SUSANNA. What is the matter ? Why are you so quiet, Daniel ?

DANIEL. Sad news, Susanna.

TOBIT. Very sad indeed, Benjamin.

BENJAMIN. What is it ?

DAVID. We have found Jacob's body.

All remain quiet.

MIRIAM. Poor Jacob ! What a friend we have lost !

CHILION. How did you find him ?

TOBIT. The waves brought him to the shore, and some fishermen gathered round him.

BENJAMIN. What have you done with the body ?

DANIEL. We have buried it on the shore.

BENJAMIN (*pause*). May glory be to the Lord ! It is an hour of sorrow. Let us all be together. Miriam, Chilion, call everyone, and tell them the sad news.

Miriam goes to the house, and Chilion to the garden.

DANIEL. It is unbearable to see the suffering of our race, Benjamin. A chosen race, indeed !

TOBIT. I feel like going back home and killing every Greek I come across, whatever may be the consequences.

BENJAMIN. Patience, Tobit, patience ! Let sorrow teach us patience.

Rebekah, Sarah, Orpha and Amos enter with Miriam from one side.

DAVID. Benjamin, we should do something in memory of Jacob.

Anna and Judith enter with Chilion from the other side.

BENJAMIN. In this hour of sorrow, the men and women of Israel are together in this new land. (*pause*) Let us pray. Let suffering make men and women one, and let not women be separated from men. Let us utter the name of the Lord together.

ALL. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.

BENJAMIN. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. O Lord, look after Jacob and all our companions who are no more.

ALL. O Lord, look after Jacob and all our companions who are no more.

SUSANNA. Poor Jacob! (*pause*) Look! Our sadness is making the whole atmosphere dark. A big cloud has suddenly covered the sun. It seems a storm is coming.

BENJAMIN. It is a tropical country. Do not be afraid. We shall become used to it.

MIRIAM. It is becoming so unusually dark, mother. Chilion, come to me. (*Chilion comes to Miriam.*)

ORPHA. Oh, Amos, I am frightened. (*Amos comes to her.*) I have never seen such darkness in day-time.

REBEKAH. As though it is night!

JUDITH. Strange! But it is a calm and courage-giving darkness!

ANNA. Daniel, Daniel, a large patch of light in front of us at a distance!

All look towards the light.

SARAH. How glorious, how peaceful!

MIRIAM. Mother, mother, the light seems to be taking form!

ORPHA. A figure—with loving and kind eyes, full of light!

SUSANNA. The Guardian of our race! He is going to speak.

VOICE OF ELIJAH. Children of Israel! I am Elijah, your friend, the sharer of your happiness and sorrow. Do not forget your destiny in this hour of trial. May your suffering save mankind! May all the pains of the world come to you and may the world be saved! Your destiny is to bear patiently

the birth-pangs of the Messiah and prepare the world for Him. When He shall come there will be no more oppression or sorrow. By the absence of all oppressions will the Messiah be known. Until he comes, build Jerusalem wherever you go. Where there is a single Israelite in any part of the world, there is Jerusalem. Build that Jerusalem in which no one is a stranger, no form of life is foreign ; in which the lion and the lamb live together, and the serpent plays with the babe ; in which all arms are beaten into ploughshares and the whole world becomes the Holy Mountain, full of the Glory of the Lord. O Israelite woman, aspire to be a prophetess, or long to be the mother of the Messiah. O Israelite man, aspire to be a prophet, or long to be the father of the Messiah. Do not seek possession or power, and the world is yours. Hosanna ! Hosanna ! !

ALL (*softly*). Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.

The vision of Elijah disappears. There is normal light. All rub their eyes, astonished.

SUSANNA. Did we all dream Or was it real ?

BENJAMIN. It is a glorious day for us. Rebekah and Sarah, go at once and bring the Cup of Blessing.

Rebekah and Sarah go to the kitchen.

BENJAMIN. To-day we are only fourteen men and women in this new land, our new Jerusalem. A day will come when we shall be ten thousand and more. May we increase in peace to pave the way for the Messiah !

Rebekah, followed by Sarah, comes in with the earthen Cup of Blessing and puts it in the middle. All close their eyes and remain silent.

BENJAMIN (*after a pause*). The Lord our God is one Lord.

They open their eyes. Sarah takes the cup to all. Each takes a sip from the cup.

SUSANNA. May the kiss of peace make all of us loving and harmless !

They all kiss one another and remain silent.

BENJAMIN. One God ! One world !—And we are all God's children ! May all the sufferings of the world come to us, and may the world be saved !

CHILION. We have something to die for !

MIRIAM. We have something to live for !

CURTAIN

THE CROSS IN INDIA

The middle of the first century A.D. An open space at the foot of a mount in Kalamini near Madras. At the back are tall bushes and small trees through which a path leads to the peak. The mount is concealed from view by the trees and bushes. A crowd of people have gathered in the open space on either side of the path. They are waiting for Apostle Thomas, who is to preach a sermon. Some are resting, some are loitering. A woman, attractively dressed, is standing in a corner, aloof from the crowd. She is chewing a preparation of pan-leaf, betel-nut and her lips are coloured red. In the front are seated Appar and his wife, Andal. Pillai enters.

PILLAI. Lovely afternoon, Appar. Ha! Both of you to hear the western Brahmin! What fun!

APPAR. We belong to neither party. We live our own lives. Let them quarrel and fight among themselves. We remain aloof.

PILLAI. Some of the things the western Brahmins say are good, Appar. But I do not like to put any label on myself. Commonsense, which we all have, is enough for me.

ANDAL. We should hear both sides, Pillai. The western Brahmins seem to be better to me. They are gentlemen. They touch us, sit near us, and eat with us. But the priests of our homeland!—oh, they will never come near us, although they speak beautiful things about God from a distance. I wish to see a good Brahmin of our own from the north.

APPAR. Who are these western Brahmins, Pillai?

PILLAI. They come from the other side of the ocean. The rumour is that God came down to them as a man. He gathered all the poor people round him, and tried to make them free from a powerful foreign king and from their own rich people. He taught them to be honest and not to mix with the affairs of the rich. He taught them simple prayers to God, and love for all creatures. He asked them not to go to the temples or to pay tribute to the priests. Then the priests, the rich people and the governor conspired against him, nailed him on a cross and killed him. But such was the power of the man that he suddenly came back to life, and asked his followers to go all round the world to preach his teachings. Sometimes he is in heaven, sometimes on the earth, always inspiring his people.

ANDAL. Oh, Pillai, do not listen to these stories. God has no need to come down from heaven. He is powerful enough to do what he likes from there.

APPAR. Once I heard a similar silly story about God from a Brahmin of our country, who came from the north. He was nicer than the priests. He allowed us to go a little nearer to him.

PILLAI. The western Brahmins say that God came down because He loves us. He has taken away our sins by dying on the cross. If we believe and love Him, we are immediately saved. Now listen to the story. Brahmin Thomas saw the vision of his Master, Jishu, who is God and man in one, and Jishu ordered him to come to us to preach. So he hired himself to a merchant and came to Malabar. It is said that he earned much wealth by carpentry and gave away everything to the poor. Then he began to preach and converted a King in Malabar. Now he, with his followers, is in Madras to create all these troubles with the local priests. He is a wonderful—
The ringing of a bell from a distance is heard.

APPAR. The priests are coming. Let us move ten cubits from the path on both sides.

All begin to move from the path. The ringing is heard again.

ANDAL. It is going to be a tough fight, it appears.

PILLAI. But the foreign Brahmins do not fight. They just go on doing their own work, whatever may happen to them.

APPAR. A queer lot of people!

A priest, ringing the bell, enters. Four priests with swords in hand come behind him. All the people on both sides of the path stand up at a distance to show them respect.

FIRST PRIEST. Be careful of your shadows. If they touch us you will lose your children and wealth.

SECOND PRIEST. Unclean fools, why are you here? *(The people tend to move away in fright.)*

THIRD PRIEST. To hear that nasty Thomas?

FOURTH PRIEST. Tell him, if he comes to the peak—
(shows his sword) we will teach him a lesson.

FIFTH PRIEST. We will also teach you a lesson if you follow him—*(brandishes his sword)*

Pillai, Appar and Andal remain standing quietly. The crowd shouts: "We belong to you. We belong to you." The priests depart. The people remain silent for a while.

ANDAL. But why is he so eager to go to the peak of the mount which belongs to our priests? We ourselves do not go there.

PILLAI. He says that the earth belongs to God and all creatures of God, and no one should hold any part of the earth for himself.

ANDAL. Do they know, Pillai, that the priests have gone to the peak, with swords in hand ?

PILLAI. Perhaps not. But they do not mind at all, Andal. One of them from Malabar told me the other day that he felt Jishu in him and did not care a straw for his body.

APPAR. (*looks at a narrow path leading to the open space*). Who are these people coming to us ?

ANDAL. Look, Pillai, there they come.

PILLAI. How calmly, quietly and confidently they walk !

APPAR. I do not understand these silly people risking their lives for nothing.

ANDAL. Hush ! they come.

Enter Addai, Thomas's disciple, with a cross in his hand, followed by Lysia, Thomas's sister, and Apostle Thomas. They look round cheerfully, with great affection. Andal and Pillai are charmed. Appar looks at Thomas with wonder and suspicion. Thomas, Lysia and Addai begin to greet the people by touching their shoulders and saying : "May Jesus bless you." Thomas comes near the woman standing aloof from the crowd, and extends his arms to greet her.

THE WOMAN (*moving away from him*). Priests never do this. It will harm my children. Do not come near me, sir. I am not touched even by those whom the priests do not touch.

THOMAS (*looks calmly at her*). You are my daughter, I am your father and God looks after you, your children and me. Come—

The woman, fascinated, comes forward. Thomas blesses her by touching her head and making the sign of the cross over her head. The woman kneels down.

THE WOMAN. Never has a man treated me with such affection and respect ! Father, teach me—

THOMAS. Love Jesus, who is God, the Son of God and the son of man—three in one and one in three. Addai—(*Addai hands over the cross to the woman, who kisses it.*)

LYSIA (*comes to the woman and holds her hands*). You belong to Jesus, my daughter, like myself. We have no caste, no race.

PILLAI (*goes to Addai*). Just to give you a warning. The priests with swords have gone to the peak.

ADDAI (*goes to Thomas*). Master, the priests are on the peak of the mount with swords in hand. (*Thomas remains quiet.*)

LYSIA. With swords ? Can they be so brutal and mean ?

THOMAS. Do not be harsh to the people, my sister. (*pause*) They are perhaps giving me the opportunity to atone—

LYSIA. What do you mean?

THOMAS. To atone for my betrayal at Gethsemane. How pained I felt when our Lord was left alone and we fled to save ourselves as faithless cowards. To-day I must do the will of God, come what may.

ADDAI. The Community in Malabar is just in the making. Only a few people in Madras have so far accepted our Lord. The future of our faith depends entirely on you, my Master. Please do not take such an extreme step in this formative period of our work in this country.

THOMAS. Have faith in the Lord, my son. It is Jesus's work. He will look after it. When our Lord was going to Bethany to raise Lazarus, some of us hesitated to follow him, out of fear. God gave me the courage to say to them, "Let us go that we may die with him." But I failed in Gethsemane, and I, the doubting Thomas, did not believe in his rising from the tomb. I could not believe my eyes when he appeared before us, but our ever-living Lord came and touched me! (*pause*) My Lord! My God! Yes, you touched me! To-day is my day of atonement.

LYSIA. Is it wise, brother, to seek martyrdom without necessity, when God's work can be done in other ways?

THOMAS. Lysia, Lysia, do you not see the great issue involved? The earth is God's; and men and women, as children of God, must have perfect freedom to move freely and speak freely in every part of the world. See how the beautiful earth of God has been converted to the pleasure garden of Satan by designing people holding land to themselves. Our Lord laid down his life to redress the wrongs of society. He came to establish the kingdom of God first in the Holy Land and then throughout the world. They thought they had killed him. They did not know that he is the source of all lives. How can we, his children, sit idle?

ADDAI. My Master, I am confused. You told me the other day that the Lord came to establish the kingdom of God within us! Is not the inner life our main concern?

THOMAS. He came to establish the kingdom of God both within and outside. I was in the thick of the great battle, Addai, although it took me a long time to realise the plan and purpose of our Lord. His heart bled with sorrow and indignation when in his boyhood he saw around him thousands of his kith and kin crucified by the Romans. He felt so sorry for the plight of the priests who had no knowledge of the message of the Prophets. He inspired the common people to accept

the teachings of the Prophets, and to be courageous, painstaking and humble. When he entered Jerusalem with thousands of common people, the Romans and the priests became frightened, and we thought the battle was won. How boldly he denied Cæsar's godhood, saying, "Render unto Cæsar what is Cæsar's, and unto God what is God's!" How fearlessly he exposed the idle rich, saying, "Even if a camel can pass through the eye of the needle, the rich cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." How courageously he preached a simple faith of prayer, love and service, and with a cord in his hand drove the money-lenders out of the place of worship! No one could venture to face him when he freed the animals kept for sacrifice. How he scattered the money kept for paying the priests and buying the animals! What a challenge it was to the priests as well as the secular power! The story is well-known how Pilate and the priests combined to crucify him. Oh, those fateful days! Addai, the follower of Jesus has no time for ease and comfort, until the Kingdom of God is established within and without.

PILLAI (*comes to Thomas*). Sir, we have gathered here to hear something from you about your faith.

THOMAS May God bless you! (*to Addai*) Will you speak to the people first, Addai?

ADDAI. I am a novice, Master. What can I say?

THOMAS. May Jesus speak through your mouth! Speak from your heart. Never bother about the language.

ADDAI. Sisters and brothers! (*The crowd gathers round Addai, Lysia and Thomas. The woman stands near with the cross in her hand.*) Sisters and brothers! I am saying a few words to you on Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God who—

APPAR (*comes forward*). God is certainly not like a man, to have sons and daughters.

LYSIA (*to Addai*). Do not take any notice, Addai, go on.

ANDAL. Keep quiet, Appar. Do not disturb people.

ADDAI.—The only Son of God who sacrificed himself on the cross for suffering humanity. He loved children, the fallen people and the outcasts. He said that the Kingdom of God is within each one of us—

APPAR. What about a thief, a burglar or a murderer?

ANDAL. I am ashamed of you, Appar. Shut up.

ADDAI.—The Kingdom of God is within each one of us, be he a thief, a burglar or a murderer. It shines in the face of some; it is concealed in the hearts of others. We all are the

same in spirit. We appeal to every thief, every burglar, every murderer to believe in his own goodness and to express his true nature. We do not believe in coercion or punishment. Lord Jesus asks us to love one another. We remain sinners so long as we have not accepted him. To Jesus all are one. Love God and His only Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another. Amen! (*looks at Thomas*)

THOMAS. Fine indeed! May our Lord bless you! (*to Lysia*) Lysia, you must say something now. Women have as much right to speak about God as men have. Come along. We do not follow the ways of the priests.

LYSIA. My sons and daughters, enter into your own hearts, and commune with Lord Jesus there. The heart is his temple. You need not build a temple as the priests do. When we forget the temple of the heart, we build a temple only to pamper ourselves—out of vanity. My sons and daughters, be free, feel free. If you feel free, you will conquer all your oppressors, however mighty they may be. Love men. Love animals. Love all creatures. Lord Jesus once said of a dead dog, "Pearls are not equal to the whiteness of his teeth." Do not do harm to any creature. Seek the truth within yourself. "Let not him who seeks cease until he finds: When he finds he shall be joyfully astonished. Astonished he shall reach the Kingdom, and having reached the Kingdom, he shall rest." Amen!

PILLAI (*to Appar*). How charming! The priests never told us things like this.

APPAR. Do not be deceived, Pillai. These ideas do not pay in the world. She tells us not to harm animals. Are we to give up the eating of fish and meat? Queer ideas! Come, Andal, let us go home.

ANDAL. Hold your tongue. I am not going home without hearing the great man.

LYSIA (*to Thomas*). Now it is your turn, brother. The people have come to hear you.

Addai takes the cross from the woman and stands near Thomas.

THOMAS. Children of God! (*All look at Thomas.*) Perhaps it is my last message (*Lysia, Addai and the woman close their eyes to pray*), and I wish to deliver it to you with love and blessing. "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you, and whoever shall know himself shall find it. Strive therefore to know yourselves, and ye shall be aware that ye are the sons of the Father; ye shall know that ye are in the City of God and ye are

the City." You oppressed, downtrodden people, build up a city within you over which Jesus will reign, giving you happiness, freedom and love. Then you will be able to build a city outside, which no oppressor will be able to take away from you. Children of God, see Jesus in everything. Let parents see Jesus in their children; husbands in their wives; wives in their husbands; friends in their friends; men and women in one another and in animals. This world will then be the Kingdom of God. Do not think it is impossible. After the passing away of our Lord, we, his disciples, built such a Kingdom of God by pooling all our resources. Each of us took from the common pool according to his needs. There was plenty for all. Let all people in the world follow us, and the world will be Heaven. Children of God, be peace-makers, and give up the fear of death. If you can learn the art of dying smilingly for a good cause, not merely shall you be free but you will transform your so-called enemies. Listen to the words of Lord Jesus. No one who hearkens to His words shall see death. Amen! (*All keep quiet for a while.*)

ANDAL. Appar, how I would like to be a follower of this great man from now!

APPAR. Do not be foolish.

ANDAL. I tell you, Appar, I have never heard such a speech in my life. To follow him I am ready to give you up, and to give up even my children. Oh, I am really moved!

APPAR. Andal, do not be silly. (*pause*) Oh, what will happen to me! This lunatic is going to break up my home. (*holds the hands of Andal*) Follow him after the harvest-time is over. I will find another woman then.

ANDAL. Let me think—

PILLAI. Be quiet, Appar.

LYSIA (*to all*). We never compel anyone to follow us. Accept us if you feel that what we say is good.

All are quiet.

THOMAS. It is time now. I must climb the mount and go to the peak. Addai, look after my children in Madras and Malabar. Lysia, look after my daughters in the Community.

THE WOMAN. My Master, my Master, do not leave me, do not leave me.

THOMAS. Do not obstruct God's work, my daughter.

THE WOMAN. How am I to live? Those who do not touch me during the day, come to buy my body at night. That has been my means of livelihood. I do not know who the fathers of my children are.

THE CROSS IN INDIA

THOMAS. Never mind, my daughter. Jesus sees our intentions, not our actions.

THE WOMAN. How am I to keep my children?

THOMAS. Do not think of the morrow, my daughter. *(makes the sign of the cross over her heart)* Jesus will look after them.

THE WOMAN. I never knew that a man could be to a woman what you have been to me, my Father. What is this mysterious thing compelling me to feel as though I have been yours for eternity?

THOMAS. Never fear. You are my disciple. *(blesses her by touching her head. To Lysia)* Lysia, look after my daughter and my grandchildren.

THE WOMAN. You came like lightning to transform my life, and now like lightning you are going away! *(weeps)*

LYSIA. Come, my daughter, let us pray. *(She and the woman kneel down to pray.)* Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name! Thy Kingdom come to the murderers!

ADDAI. Bless me, Master, so that I may be worthy of you. *(Thomas blesses him by touching his head and Addai kneels down to pray.)* Holy Mary, Mother of Jesus and of the universe, hallowed be Thy Name! Forgive the murderers!

THOMAS *(looks at the crowd)*. May all people love one another and seek peace!

Thomas, taking the cross from Addai, walks steadily along the path and disappears behind the trees and bushes.

APPAR. A fanatic!

PILLAI. A saint!

CURTAIN

THE FAKIR'S LIZARD

The last decade of the eighth century A.D. Early evening. The corner of the garden attached to the Fakir's cottage, in a village in Sind. Kamala, clad in a sari and jacket, is seated under a tree. She is sewing a small piece of coloured cloth. Occasionally she looks anxiously at the Fakir's cottage close by. Gafur enters and gazes wonderingly at Kamala, who takes no notice of him. Gafur walks out thoughtfully. In two or three seconds he reappears and stands before Kamala. Kamala looks at Gafur.

GAFUR. Please do not take me amiss, sister, for my inquisitiveness. No Muslim woman can come here alone. This is the rule of the Fakir. May I know who you are and why you are here ?

KAMALA. For safety, brother. I am a Hindu girl.

GAFUR. Have you met the Holy Fakir ?

KAMALA. No, when I came, the door of the cottage was shut. I did not like to disturb him. I have been here for about an hour, enjoying the peace of the place.

GAFUR. Are you in trouble ? I shall be glad if I can be of any help to you.

KAMALA. You know the big fair which is being held on the seashore about a mile from here ? I came to the fair with my parents this morning. Late in the afternoon, while passing through a crowd near the temple, I became separated from them. I sought them in vain for a long time and then I began to feel frightened. Our house is twenty miles away, and I did not know what to do as evening was approaching. Suddenly I remembered this cottage and thought it would be the safest place for me to pass the night. In the morning I will go back home. I am not feeling lonely. I bought needle and thread and this piece of cloth at the fair, and I am making a bed-sheet for my baby brother.

GAFUR. How did you come to know of this cottage, sister ?

KAMALA. The Fakir is well known in this district. I came with my parents to see him about a month ago.

GAFUR. It is not often that one can see the Fakir. Were you able to see him ?

KAMALA. Only from a distance. His bright eyes and broad forehead charmed us. Absorbed in thought, he was looking at the sky. We did not venture to go near him. But the whole place was full of peace. I remember also, how suddenly a lizard came and climbed on to my mother's body. People told us not even to think of harming any creature in the Fakir's

garden. My mother patted the lizard. I gave it some sweets, but it did not care for them.

GAFUR. It is the Fakir's favourite lizard. He has also a cat. People say that the cat and the lizard are great friends. The Fakir's peace has made them peaceful. I have only seen the lizard once, but I have seen his cat several times. (*pause*) Never mind, sister, I will try to see the Fakir soon, and with his help I will make some arrangements for your stay. Unfortunately, my own house is about ten miles away. (*pause*) I am Gafur. Take me as your brother. May I know your name?

KAMALA. My name is Kamala. I am named after a Hindu Goddess.

GAFUR. How happy it is that after the turmoil of the invasion from Arabia is over, the Hindus and the Muslims of Sind are living so peacefully. Many Hindu teachers come to the Fakir to show their respect, and the Fakir has great regard for them. All the capable Hindus were kept in high positions in Bin Kasim's government, and they have kept their positions since he was executed by the Khalif. What a mean state-intrigue it was to do away with an able general, who first conquered Sind, and then established peace here!

KAMALA. There was much ill-feeling at first, when King Dahir, with many Hindu heroes, was killed on the battlefield and the Queen and all the women of the royal family burned themselves. I have heard the bards' songs describing the bravery of the Queen on the battlefield and her self-sacrifice for the sake of honour.

GAFUR. Conquest always creates fear, ill-feeling and confusion. If the Queen could have trusted us, the Muslims, and had not taken such an extreme step, how nice it would have been!

KAMALA. The poll-tax is still a burden on the Hindus, and keeps them aloof from the Muslims.

GAFUR. The Fakir has advised the Governor to rescind it, telling him that Islam teaches universal brotherhood. (*looks out*) My friends are coming here. I left them on the east side of the garden.

Enter Arshad, Rashid and Rahaman.

ARSHAD. Hello, Gafur, we are seeking you. What are you doing here?

Arshad, Rashid and Rahaman look suspiciously at Kamala.

RASHID (*jokingly, in a low voice.*) What! Alone with a young woman in the Fakir's garden!

GAFUR (*giving him a mild slap*). Do not be frivolous! I will give you a harder one if you are naughty. (*seriously*)

She is a Hindu girl. She is a sister to me, and to you all. Her name is Kamala. She has lost her parents in the crowd at the fair, and has come here to the Fakir because her home is many miles away. *(to Kamala)* Sister, here are my friends, Arshad, Rashid and Rahaman.

KAMALA *(joins her palms)*. Namaste.

ARSHAD, RASHID AND RAHAMAN. Salaam. *(Each touches his forehead with the tips of his fingers.)*

RAHAMAN. Can we go to the fair to find her parents? The crowd must have become thinner by now.

RASHID. No, Rahaman. Thousands of people are still there. We shall not be able to find them. Let us see the Fakir first.

GAFUR. What a peaceful place! All can be brothers and sisters here.

ARSHAD. How nice it would be if all the people in the world were Muslims, and the whole world as peaceful as this garden!

KAMALA. How nice it would be if all the people in the world were Hindus, and the whole world as peaceful as this garden!

GAFUR. The Fakir says that the name does not matter. It is the spirit that counts. *(All become quiet for a time.)*

ARSHAD. It is the spirit that counts. If only men understood it!

Rahaman. If the Fakir's lizard and cat can understand, men also can.

RASHID. The gentle lizard! When I came here last time about three months ago, how fearlessly it climbed on my body. Its beautiful red colour charmed me.

ARSHAD. Red colour! One day when I had just finished my prayer on the north side of the garden, suddenly I saw it on my thigh. It is beautifully green—as green as the grass yonder!

RAHAMAN. Do not talk nonsense. I came with my father the other day to bring a milk offering to the Fakir. The cat and the lizard were playing together. The yellow lizard on the back of the white cat looked splendid.

GAFUR. Either all of you are joking; or you are all liars. As if I had not seen the lizard! It is as white as milk. When I saw it I thought how wonderfully the lizard expressed the purity of this place.

RAHAMAN. It is bad to tell a lie in a sacred place, Gafur.

ARSHAD. I hate such jokes. Lies are lies, even if they are white lies.

RASHID. I am sure you are all drunken and Rahaman had jaundice at the time of seeing the lizard. *(All are excited.)*

THE FAKIR'S LIZARD

GAFUR. Ask sister. She will verify what I say.

KAMALA. I am very sorry, brother. When I came here with my parents I saw the lizard as clearly and distinctly as I see you all. It is blue. It reminded me of the sea near our home. What is the matter with you all? Why are you telling lies?

ARSHAD (*in anger*). What! I am telling lies and you are telling the truth! I will think thrice before I can believe a Hindu.

GAFUR (*in anger*). Shut up, Arshad.

ARSHAD. Hold your tongue, Gafur. I say, hold your tongue. (*trembles with anger*)

KAMALA. I must not stay here any longer. I must go to the Fakir. (*goes a few steps*)

Enter the Fakir with a fan in his hand. He wears a loin-cloth. He has a short beard but no moustache, and his head is shaven.

FAKIR. Here I am, my daughter. (*to all*) Peace! (*fans himself*) Oh, what heat! (*fans Arshad*) Oh, what heat! (*fans Gafur*) Heat of righteous indignation! (*fans Rashid and Rahaman*) Heat of the atmosphere!

Gafur and Arshad bend their heads in shame. The others stand calmly and look at the Fakir.

ARSHAD. Pardon me, Father, I have broken the law of Allah in this holy place by becoming angry.

GAFUR. Pardon me, Father, for my sense of indignation. I ought not to have asserted myself. May Allah reform His world! Who am I? Surrender is Islam.

FAKIR. Yes, my son, surrender is Islam. What is the quarrel about?

KAMALA. About your lizard, Father.

FAKIR. My lizard is a symbol of harmony, and you are quarrelling about him! Naughty children! I must beat you. (*strikes very mildly on the heads of Gafur, Arshad, Rashid and Rahaman with the fan; to Kamala*) Did you also join in the fray, my daughter? Why are you with these naughty boys? Who are you?

KAMALA. I have lost my parents in the crowd at the fair, and have come here to be under your protection for the night. I am a Hindu girl.

FAKIR. May Allah protect us, His children, Hindus and Muslims! Where is your home?

KAMALA. About twenty miles from here, near the sea.

FAKIR. Never mind. Have an evening meal of milk and fruit with me. Then I will take you to Karim's house in the

neighbourhood. He is a friend of mine. There you will be as free as the air. In the morning he will take you to your home.— And who are you, my boys?

RASHID. We are from a village, about ten miles away. We have come here to enjoy the peace of the place.

FAKIR (*smiling*). Or to disturb the peace of my garden! Why did you quarrel?

GAFUR. We quarrelled about the colour of your^o lizard.

FAKIR. My lizard! My chameleon! That is interesting. Now I understand. What colour was he, my daughter?

KAMALA. I saw him when I came here on another occasion. He was blue.

FAKIR. Yes, he can be as blue as the sky. (*to Gafur*) What colour did you see?

GAFUR. White, Father.

FAKIR. Ha! Listen to what happened one day. I searched and searched but could not find him. Yet he was all the while near me, embracing the white cat. They matched so well. (*to Rashid*) And you?

RASHID. Red, Father.

FAKIR. Sometimes he looks as red as the vermillion on some Hindu women's foreheads. (*to Arshad*) How did he appear to you?

ARSHAD. I saw him beautifully green.

FAKIR. When he basks in the sunshine, I have to be very careful in walking over the grass. (*to Rahaman*) How you see him?

RAHAMAN. Yellow, Father.

FAKIR. The vain daughter of a rich family in the neighbourhood hides her ugliness with gold ornaments. (*jokingly*) This is between you and me. You are not going to tell her what I say to you. When she comes here, the lizard lovingly climbs on her neck and becomes as glowing as her gold necklace. But I must tell you something about him which you have not noticed. He can be quite colourless as well. One day in the rainy season he fell into a shallow pool and became as colourless as the water. I could detect him only by his movement. (*pause*) Oh what a world! People are too sure of themselves. Why did you not doubt yourselves, my children?

ARSHAD. We would not have quarrelled if we had doubted ourselves.

FAKIR. Allah brings hesitation and doubt so that we may know the tuth. Satan brings over-confidence. Learn to doubt, my children. Doubt is the beginning of Islam. Our Prophet doubted the vagaries of the mind and the opinions of the people, and discovered Allah and Islam. Doubt what you see, do, think and feel, and the mercy of Allah will come. "When the evening time comes, expect not the morning ; when the morning time comes, expect not the evening. Perpare as long as you are in good health for sickness, and so long as you are alive, for death."

GAFUR. Why is this over-confidence ? Why do we quarrel, Father ?

FAKIR. Because we do not care to know the lizard as he is. He is my book of knowledge. He has opened my eyes to Allah, His universe and His creatures. If we take Allah as He is, the universe as it is, and the creatures as they are, we shall never quarrel. Our minds are always colouring them, although in themselves they are without colour. When people refuse to be deceived by their minds, there will be peace and brotherhood. All will realise unity in difference.

ARSHAD. How can we make people realise it ?

FAKIR. By making all the people in the world Muslim. The Holy Prophet says that Islam is the natural faith of mankind. A child is born with this faith, although his parents make him otherwise. How simple our Prophet was, and how simple his message is !

GAFUR. There is a story of a rich man who came to see the Holy Prophet. Even after staying a long time, he could not recognise him among his followers, and asked, "But which is the Prophet ?"

FAKIR. This is a beautiful story. The Prophet had no false show. He espoused the cause of the slaves and the women. It is said that he had many wives. But people do not know that he wanted to raise the status of the women thereby, and that they were really his disciples. He says that all Muslims are brothers and sisters. There is no race or caste in Islam. When Islam is truly accepted, all will be fakirs like me without property.

ARSHAD. But the Holy Koran sanctions property.

FAKIR. Yes, as a concession to frail man. When real Islamic brotherhood comes, all will share the necessary things of life. All will be spiritually equal and have equal opportunities. There will not be good things for the few and rotten things for the many. Peace will come to the world when all people are Muslims and nobody seeks wealth for wealth's sake.

RAHAMAN. How can we be true Muslims, Father?

FAKIR. By making our hearts the Mosque of God. By sincerely praying to Allah at least five times a day. By making the rich poor and the poor rich, until all are on the same level. By fasting for the sake of purity and health. By loving Allah and all His creatures. By making the family safe, society secure, mankind free and the world one. By making Mecca the spiritual centre of the world.

GAFUR. By making Mecca the spiritual centre of the world?

FAKIR. Yes. Wherever there is a Muslim in any part of the world, there is Mecca in his heart.

GAFUR. You have opened my eyes, Father. I have found my Islam. From to-day all my family property is for the poor, and I am going from one end of Sind to the other to preach to the rich the gospel of equality.

RAHAMAN. I am going to visit all the Mosques in Sind and tell people to love the Mosque as the symbol of the heart, where God's presence is felt.

ARSHAD. I am going to form an Islamic association for loving and serving all God's creatures, large or small, intelligent or unintelligent.

RASHID. I am going to organise a Muslim Unity Movement throughout the world.

FAKIR. May Allah bless you all! I wish you success. Remember that the lizard can be both coloured and colourless. Then you will be happy and make all people happy. *(pause)* It is getting late, my children. I must take leave of you.

GAFUR, ARSHAD, RAHAMAN and RASHID *(to Fakir)*. Salaam, Father. *(to Kamala)* Salaam, sister.

KAMALA *(with joined palms)*. Namaste.

FAKIR. May Allah bless you!

Gafur, Arshad, Rahaman and Rashid go out.

FAKIR. We are alone now. *(pause)* The sun is setting. I must go to my cottage to say my prayer. Then we will have our evening meal. After that I will take you to Karim's house.

KAMALA. Father, I want to tell you something.

FAKIR. What?

KAMALA. I wish to be a Muslim and give up Hinduism.

FAKIR. Dig in one place, my daughter, if you want a well for water. Do not mistake the idol for God. Take everything as the image of God. You will then come to Islam naturally, through your own faith.

THE FAKIR'S LIZARD

KAMALA. May Allah give me strength to follow your teachings! *(pause)* I have one more question to ask.

FAKIR. Ask.

KAMALA. They have all chosen their own paths to preach to the world what they think to be the best. I feel I must do my part. But I will not choose for myself. Which do you think is the best way for me?

FAKIR. May Allah bless you! How amazing! Your aspiration is in full accordance with our Order. The Fakir who started our Order was under the direct guidance of Allah. He gave up all the pleasures of the world and lived in a hut near the Kaaba. After the Prophet's death, when the quarrel began as to who should succeed him, the Fakir kept himself aloof. His followers began to practise the truths quietly. They all did what he told them to do. It was in Arabia that my own teacher, the Fakir of the Order, asked me to meditate on Allah, to feel the glory of His creation and to love all His creatures. As Bin Kasim conquered Sind and peace was established, I was asked to come here. So I obey the instructions of my teacher and go from place to place.

KAMALA. What a wonderful Order!

FAKIR. The pleasures of life are not for us, the fakirs of the Order. We like to see other people enjoying themselves. Our Holy Prophet was really a Fakir. It is said that the first Fakir of our Order received inspiration from him. The Prophet asked others to live in the world, but to keep the fakir's spirit within. If one believes in the way of my lizard one will be happy, whether one is a fakir or a man of the world.

KAMALA. What really is the way of the lizard?

FAKIR. Through my lizard, one can know the way of God, the way of creation and the way of all creatures. They all appear differently to different people at different times. Yet they have their own nature. The many in the one, and the one in the many—this is the secret. Allah is one, and yet called by so many names. So is the universe. So is every creature. When this is realised by us all, the whole world will be Muslim and all people, the followers of Islam.

KAMALA. Others have chosen great paths for themselves. Tell me definitely what I should do.

FAKIR. Serve Allah by serving your parents. Serve Allah by serving your husband when you are married. Serve Allah by serving your children when they are born. Do not preach. Practise.

CURTAIN

THE SACRED FIRE OF LIFE

785 A.D. Early afternoon. The coast of Sanjan in Gujerat. A grassy plot of land with small trees, adjoining the beach. Armaiti and her friend, Sraosha, are seated in the shade of the small trees. Gatha, Armaiti's six-year-old daughter, is digging with a stick at a distance. She has near her two small brass plates and a wooden ladle. Armaiti and Sraosha wear coloured saris. Gatha has made her sari into a skirt and the upper part of her body is bare. Part of a ship is visible through the trees.

ARMAITI. Come to the shade, Gatha. You have been too long in the sun.

GATHA. No, I am digging. (*digs and puts sandy earth on the plates*) I must look after my guests, the trees; they are hungry.

ARMAITI. You are an obstinate child! (*Gatha does not take any notice.*)

SRAOSHA (*to Armaiti*). Leave her alone. The sun will not harm her. (*pause*) I am feeling very unhappy, Armaiti, in this foreign land.

ARMAITI. Never mind, Sraosha. We will make this beautiful Sanjan our own.

SRAOSHA. I wish there had been a little tolerance in Iran!

ARMAITI. Life has no meaning without freedom of worship. Ahura Mazda has graciously led us to this new land. Let us try our luck here.

SRAOSHA. Do you think the Dastur's mission to King Jai Rana will succeed?

ARMAITI. The King has been so kind as to give us a new abode. But he must consult his priests before he can allow us to build a temple in which we can install our sacred fire.

SRAOSHA. Are our people comfortable in their new home?

ARMAITI. Bahman has told me that it is a huge building, and all our people are the guests of the King.

SRAOSHA. We should be very proud, Armaiti, to be chosen with Bahman and Jamshid to look after the sacred fire in the ship. Perhaps Bahman and Jamshid would like to come to the shore for a while. Shall I go to relieve them?

ARMAITI. Stay with me a little longer, Sraosha. (*pause*) How hurriedly the Dastur served the Fire and ate his meal this morning! He was so anxious to reach the palace of the King in

time ! I wonder what the priests will think of our request, and what our fate will be ! *(sighs)* Anyhow, we feel perfectly secure here. Let us hope that everything will go well through the grace of Ahura Mazda, and that the sacred fire will be installed in this country.

GATHA *(with a plate full of sandy earth in her left hand, and a ladle in her right, goes to one tree after another, and serves each with a ladleful of earth)*. Eat it all, please, and ask for more. There is plenty for you. *(She comes back and begins to dig again.)*

SRAOSHA. The Dastur was telling me yesterday that the King's ancestors and our own belonged to the same race and once lived together. A difference arose about certain forms of worship and they parted company. Our ancestors went to Iran, and the King's ancestors came down to Ind. Is it not strange that destiny has brought us together again ?

ARMAITI. It is so sad to leave one's own country ! Our people has suffered for more than a hundred years under foreign rule. Conquest is always evil ; but how different it would have been if we had been allowed to pursue our own faith. Now we are here to breathe in a free atmosphere. If we can get a foothold, then, perhaps, with the friendship of the people here, we shall be able to create a new life.

SRAOSHA. That will be splendid. If the King is favourable, we shall be able to settle down happily.

GATHA *(excitedly)*. Mummy, Mummy, a beetle near my plates. I am covering it with sand.

ARMAITI. Do not be naughty. It will not be able to breathe.

GATHA. It will be fun to cover it. *(takes sand in her hands)*

ARMAITI *(with a show of anger)*. Gatha, come here. *(Gatha comes.)* Let the beetle alone. Let me have some fun with you. *(closes Gatha's nostrils and lips with her fingers)*

GATHA *(struggles and moves her mother's fingers with her hands)*. Oh, I cannot breathe. I shall die.

ARMAITI. Will not the beetle have the same pain, if you cover it with sand ? Will it not die ?

GATHA *(looks at her mother, bewildered)*. Yes, it will die. *(pause)* Mummy, I will love the beetle.

ARMAITI *(kisses Gatha)*. You are a good girl. Leave the beetle alone.

GATHA *(goes to the beetle)*. I love you, beetle. *(removes the sand from its path)* Go your way. *(comes to her mother)* Oh, Mummy, I feel so happy.

ARMAITI. Because you have made the beetle happy. Our Prophet Zarathustra says, "Happiness comes to one from whom happiness goes to others."

GATHA. How lovely! "Happiness comes to one—

ARMAITI.—From whom happiness goes to others.

GATHA. Happiness comes to one from whom happiness goes to others.

ARMAITI. I am proud of my good girl, Sraosha. (*kisses Gatha*) Gatha, the angel, Vahu Mano, will love you if you love all creatures. He looks after them. To-morrow is Vahu Mano's day. We are all going to fast. Would you like to fast with us?

GATHA (*after a pause*). No. I shall feel hungry—(*looks innocently at Armaiti and Sraosha*)

SRAOSHA. All right, you shall fast when you are a big girl. Come to me. I will tell you the story of Zarathustra.

GATHA (*comes to Sraosha*). Why is he called Zarathustra?

SRAOSHA. Because he was full of golden light. Zarath means golden, and Ustra means light. Even while he was a tiny thing in his mother's womb, his light shone through her body.

GATHA. Will his light shine through my body, if I am his mother?

SRAOSHA. If you love him and love all creatures, his light will shine through your eyes, your cheeks and your face.

GATHA. Tell me, Sraosha, more about him.

SRAOSHA. When he was a baby, his enemy threw him to some wild horses and—do you know—a strong and beautiful white horse came and stood over him, and the other horses could not do him any harm. Then his enemy threw him to the wolves, but the wolves refused to eat him. We love all animals because some of them looked after our prophet.

GATHA. I would like to go to the wolves. I would love them, and they would not eat me. What happened to the prophet after that?

SRAOSHA. When he was fifteen he left his wife whom he had just married, and went away to a quiet place for fifteen long years. There he prayed to Ahura and learnt to love the world and all beings. Then he came back, and the whole of Iran followed him. He taught us to love fire.

GATHA. Why fire? Why not sand? I love sand so much. I cannot touch fire, but I can touch sand.

ARMAITI (*gives Gatha an affectionate slap*). Again you are a naughty girl.

GATHA (*looks at her mother with curiosity*). Why?

ARMAITI. There is nothing like fire. See how its flame always looks upwards. See how it makes everything its own by burning it. It teaches us to look up to Ahura Mazda, and to make all men and women and all things our own. No, there is nothing like fire.

GATHA. How lovely it is to go up into the sky with the smoke of the fire. I would like to be a huge fire and ~~put~~ all people and all things into me. They would burn within me and become my own, and I would love them all. (*laughs*)

ARMAITI. Yes, you will be a huge fire! (*Armaiti and Sraosha laugh.*)

GATHA. Where is Daddy, Mummy?

ARMAITI. In the ship.

GATHA (*goes toward the beach*). Daddy, Daddy, come and tell me a story.

SRAOSHA. I am going to the ship, Armaiti, to attend to the fire. (*goes out*)

ARMAITI. Ask Daddy to bring Jamshid with him.

GATHA. Daddy—

BAHMAN (*from the ship*). Coming—

GATHA. Bring uncle Jamshid with you.

ARMAITI. Where is the beetle?

GATHA (*looks for it*). It is gone, Mummy.

ARMAITI. Ask Daddy and Jamshid to tell you the story of Iran.

Jamshid and Bahman enter. Each wears a piece of cloth in the form of a skirt reaching to the ankles, and over it a loose shirt, and has on his head a flat cap, made of black cloth.

GATHA (*running to Jamshid*). Tell me a story.

JAMSHID. Ask Daddy.

GATHA. Tell me a story, Daddy.

BAHMAN. What story?

GATHA. The story of Iran. (*pause*) When are we going back to Iran, Daddy? I do not like this country. I want to go back to Khōrasan and play with Atar. I have not seen him for a long time. (*she cries.*)

ARMAITI. Come, darling. You will have playmates like Atar here very soon. (*kisses Gatha*)

JAMSHID. She is feeling lonely, Bahman. She must have a playmate of her own age.

GATHA. Why should we not go back to Iran, Daddy?

BAHMAN. Iran is no longer ours, Gatha. It has been taken away from us by the Arabs.

GATHA. No. Iran is mine. I will go there and live, and serve fire there. Atar will go to his Mosque and I will go to my Fire temple—and we will play together.

BAHMAN. They will not allow you to have a Fire temple, my girl. Neither will they allow you to live there.

GATHA. I will go there and say, "It is my country." If they ask me to move, I will not, even if they come to kill me.

BAHMAN. Brave girl!

JAMSHID. Mazdak would have been glad to have her with him, Bahman.

GATHA. I want to go back to Iran, I want to go back to Iran. (*cries*)

ARMAITI. Do not be a silly girl. What about your guests? They must be hungry again by now.

GATHA (*wipes her tears and laughs*). Oh, I forgot my guests. I must go and look after them. (*takes plates and ladle*)

ARMAITI. Do not go too far away. (*Gatha goes out to the trees.*)

ARMAITI (*to Jamshid*). She used to play with Atar in Khorasan. Then the quarrel between the Muslims and ourselves took a serious turn. Atar's parents would not allow him to come to our house, and we would not let her go to their house.

JAMSHID. What an unhappy state of things it was! Let us hope things will go better here.

BAHMAN. A life without faith has no meaning, Jamshid.

ARMAITI. What did you mean, Jamshid, when you said to Gatha that Mazdak would have been glad to have her with him?

BAHMAN. I have heard Mazdak's name, but I do not know the whole story. He went against the King and the priests. Is it not so?

JAMSHID.—And also against all the rich people in Iran. He was murdered in the end.

ARMAITI. I do not want to hear about him any more, Jamshid. He was a traitor to our country.

JAMSHID. Do not be so easily carried away by opinions, Armaiti. After Zarathustra we had two other prophets, Mani and Mazdak. One lived about four hundred years ago, and the other about two hundred years ago. Both of them tried to make our faith real and true. Mani preached the harmony of all the faiths of the world. Mazdak declared that a faith was of no real value, if it was not sincerely practised. He appealed to the rich to give up their wealth, to the priests to forsake their privileges, and to the King to abdicate willingly in favour of the people. He was murdered. The problem remains the same to-day. How can we realise brotherhood if we do not remove unnatural distinctions?

BAHMAN. It is quite true, Jamshid, that so-called religion is like opium to keep the poor in ignorance. The rich uphold it, not because they love it, but because it ensures their life of pleasure. I feel sure that the Muslims were able to defeat us because they firmly believed in equality and we despised it.

JAMSHID. I assure you, Bahman, if Mazdak had succeeded, Iran would have led the whole world, and we would not have been here to-day.

ARMAITI. Now I see! It seems so simple to me, Jamshid. If we feel Ahura's powers in all, how can we have any false distinctions? All are then equal in Ahura. (*pause*) Is it possible for us, Jamshid, to follow Mazdak, and make our faith vital and real?

JAMSHID. We are in a new land. It may lead us to a struggle in this country, and we are so few. We must keep the germ of our faith alive for the sake of our descendants.

BAHMAN. I think a real faith can be only for the few. I wonder if it ever can be for all!

JAMSHID. Human society will be ruined if a real faith is not accepted by all of us. Mazdak had a clear vision of the future of mankind. He was sure that a time would come when all faiths would be one, all-races would be friendly, and men and women would be free.

ARMAITI. I wonder what the Dastur will think about it.

JAMSHID. I do not fancy he will like Mazdak's ideas.

BAHMAN. We are passing through a life and death struggle. He is now concerned with our immediate problems. We are the guests of the people of this land. We should not do anything to make them suspicious of us.

JAMSHID. The fire that we serve is really the sacred fire of life within each one of us, Bahman. It is always burning there.

It can reduce to ashes all our selfishness and jealousy, and its flame can point out the abode of Ahura Mazda. Perhaps it is our destiny to kindle this sacred fire in the hearts of the people of this country. We are here to serve them.

ARMAITI. If we can fulfil the purpose of our prophets, what a beautiful world it will be !

JAMSHID. There will be no more conflicts in the minds of men. Men's inner peace will bring about a peaceful society. Oneness will reign within and without.

Enter the Dastur, the religious leader. Armaiti, Bahman and Jamshid bow their heads to show him respect.

DASTUR. Ahura Mazda has showered his blessings upon us, Armaiti, Bahman and Jamshid. The King will allow us to build temples for the sacred fire.

ARMAITI. May Ahura bless the King, his priests and his people !

BAHMAN. What did the King discuss with you, sir ?

DASTUR. Some people have told him that we worship two Gods, the God of good and the God of evil. I explained to him that Ahura Mazda is beyond good and evil. From Him the twin spirits of good and evil came. One created Life, and the other Not-life, so that man might attain his full glory and the purpose of creation might be fulfilled. The King did not know that according to our faith evil is an illusion, while goodness is eternal. From a learned priest he had heard about Mazdak, and he was disturbed for a time. But after our talk he agreed to let us stay and build the temple. The only condition is that we must adopt the language and customs of the country.

ARMAITI. Sir, what does the King mean by this condition ? Are we to give up our language and customs !

DASTUR. No. The King means that we shall be friendly to the people of this country, if we adopt their language and customs in our contact with them. We are at perfect liberty to follow our own traditions among ourselves.

BAHMAN. I am glad to hear this. It is strange that many people think we worship two Gods.

JAMSHID. The prince must be very learned to know about Mazdak. We have just been discussing his life and teachings.

DASTUR. The King was frightened lest our contact with his people should create disloyalty among them—lest they should want to establish a people's government. I have told him that we intend to lead a peaceful life and abide by the laws of the

country. (*pause*) Now we should make arrangements for carrying the sacred fire to our new dwelling. All our people are eagerly waiting for us there.

ARMAITI. It is an auspicious moment for us to bring the sacred fire from the ship to this new soil. May we serve the fire here, sir, before we carry it to our home?

DASTUR. That is a very good idea, Armaiti. We must bring it here, then.

ARMAITI. Gatha, Gatha, come quickly. We are going to fetch the fire from the ship. (*Gatha comes running, with the wooden ladle in her hand.*)

GATHA. Are we going back to Iran with the fire?

DASTUR. We are here in our new Iran, Gatha. What fun it is to go from country to country with our sacred fire and to talk to the people about our prophet! We are going to build a new Iran here.

GATHA. Will it be like the old Iran, and shall I have Atar to play with me?

DASTUR. Yes, we will build great temples here. Many Atars will come to play with you. We will also build a tower of silence so that when we die, our bodies can be given to the birds.

GATHA. Yes, we will build our new Iran. Let us go to fetch the fire.

ARMAITI. Come, then.

GATHA. Sraosha, Sraosha—we are going to build a new Iran.

Armaiti and Gatha go to the ship.

JAMSHID. Do you think we shall be happy here, sir? How will the people of this land take us?

DASTUR. There was a time when the people of Iran and the people of Ind were one. We shall be one again. Our faith teaches us good thoughts, good words and good deeds. Zarathustra's golden light will shine on us and on the people of this land.

Sraosha and Armaiti enter, carrying the sacred fire. Gatha follows them with some pieces of wood in her hands. The fire is placed on the ground. All gather round it with great reverence.

DASTUR. We carry with us the genius of Iran. Our race once built a great empire. Our prophet spoke of one God and one humanity. Through the immortal powers of Ahura,

our ancestors realised the sacredness of the whole creation. To us mother earth is holy piety, water is divine wholeness, and the minerals are the powers of God,. The vegetables remind us of immortality, and the animals express Ahura's Good Mind. The good spirit is our guardian, to whom the evil spirit is an illusion. (*pause*) Oh, Ahura. may we see Thee, may we come close to Thee, may we be absorbed into Thee !

ALL (*with closed eyes*). Oh, Ahura, may we all be absorbed into Thee !

There is silence for a while. Then they open their eyes.

ARMAITI. Put wood into the fire, Gatha. (*Gatha puts wood into the fire.*)

DASTUR. Let us all repeat the holy Mantra now.

ALL (*with closed eyes*). May fire be the purest and the holiest symbol of Ahura to us ! May righteousness make us holy ! May we worship the Lord of Life ! May we help the needy and receive divine blessings ! Oh, Ahura, may insight come with a noble mind to us whom Thou lovest !

All open their eyes.

DASTUR. We are now ready to start for our new home.

GATHA. I do not want to go back to Iran any more.

DASTUR. Will you be happy here, Gatha ?

GATHA. Yes. Mummy has taught me how to be happy. I felt happy when I made the beetle happy. I know what our prophet said.

DASTUR. What did he say ?

GATHA "Happiness comes to him from whom happiness goes to others."

DASTUR. An ideal Iranian ! Do not forget the sacred fire.

GATHA. No. I will keep it alight. (*puts a piece of wood into the fire*)

CURTAIN

THE FLUTE OF KRISHNA

The last decade of the sixteenth century. A moon-lit midnight on the bank of the Sacred river in Navadvip in Bengal. Under a tree Gurudas and Harimati, a Vaishnava and a Vaishnavi, are seated. Their only belongings, two bundles of blankets and clothes, and two small water-pots, lie near them. Gurudas wears a white Join-cloth, and Harimati a white Sari without a border. Harimati's head is shaven. Gurudas has only a tuft of hair on the crown of his head. They both have white sandal-paste marks on their foreheads. There are clouds in the sky, playing hide-and-seek with the moon. The river flowing behind the tree is full to the brim, and the sounds of the waves dashing against the bank are heard.

GURUDAS. How peaceful is Navadvip !

HARIMATI. An abode of freedom in Bengal ! The life here flows as freely as the sacred river close by.

GURUDAS. Indeed ! Is there any other place under the sun where a Brahmin like you and a Shudra like me can be together and feel as free as the air ?

HARIMATI. It is through the grace of Gauranga and Nityananda, who spread the gospel of divine love in Bengal. They loved touchables and untouchables, Hindus and Muslims, alike. A Vaishnava is a free man : he knows no social barrier. A Vaishnavi is a free woman : she knows no convention.

GURUDAS. Yes, Chandidas has sung : "Listen, O brother man. Man, real man, is free from conventions. He alone is true. There is nothing beyond him."

HARIMATI. This song inspired me, Gurudas. It gave me the strength to cut off my family ties and all the conventions of the priestly community. How free I feel to-day ! I have known the free person in me—who has no creed, no sex.

GURUDAS. To-day is the day of our new birth. What a great relief it is to change our family names ! What a joy it is to become Krishna's man and Radha's woman. Ram Charan in me is dead : I am now Gurudas. Gunamayī in you is no more : you are now Harimati.

HARIMATI. Glory to Gaur and Nitai ! One sacrificed his family and society for the sake of Krishna and His creatures. The other sacrificed the purity of the monk's life and became a householder for the salvation of the world. These two are opposites and yet intimately linked. Gaur-Nitai ! Gaur-Nitai ! Is not the whole world Krishna's ? Does it matter which way we seek him ? All ways are Krishna's, whether they are worldly or other-worldly.

GURUDAS (*suddenly becoming thoughtful*). What will happen if your people come to know that we are here ?

HARIMATI. My people will not be able to touch me any longer. I told my parents plainly that I was a free person, a free soul, and that they could not use me as their play-thing. When they decided to marry me to Sanat, I flatly refused. How can I give my life to one towards whom I am not at all attracted ?

GURUDAS. I remember the day beside the village pond when you looked at me and I looked at you, and we felt that we were one.

HARIMATI. Oh, that was a glorious day ! It is a mystery how two souls become one. Krishna must be behind this game of love. I felt that day that my destiny was tied to yours. I realised that ours was an eternal relationship. I knew that day that conventional marriage is hypocrisy, and I resolved to follow the dictates of my natural affection.

GURUDAS. What a happy world it will be when there is no conventional marriage for social privilege or economic gain—when all men and women choose their companions through love alone—when all are Vaishnavas and Vaishnavis like us.

HARIMATI. That will be Krishna's world, Gurudas.

GURUDAS. Krishna's world must have a material foundation. That free world will never come until women can earn their livelihood without depending on men. Until that day comes, let men and women, having self-respect, live by begging as we do.

HARIMATI. Ours is a moral fight. If men and women are left to themselves, I am sure that natural restraint will limit their desire for pleasure. It is unfortunate that even learned people like my father do not believe in the divinity of human nature. Yes, Gurudas, with the names of Gaur and Nitai, we must first convert Bengal, then the whole of India and then the world to this new faith of purity and freedom.

GURUDAS. Nature has her ways of subduing pleasure through sacrifice. Young people marry for pleasure. But when children are born they sacrifice their own pleasure for the sake of the children. Pleasure without love is bondage. Love which is a keen sense of oneness and identity brings sacrifice and kills pleasure.

HARIMATI. Yes, this is the way of Radha. I have realised that pleasure is utter selfishness. Do you know, Gurudas, what I have realised to-day ?

GURUDAS. What, Harimati ?

HARIMATI. Not to speak of touching you, even to look needlessly at you is selfishness on my part. I am so happy, and feel so complete that I can never touch you for mere pleasure.

GURUDAS. I am glad to hear that. A Vaishnava communes with the soul of his beloved. Through the object of his love he realises Krishna in all. How wonderful it is that intense love for one is the means to the intense love for all! Chandidas has sufficed of this love. How truly he says that man is superior to convention, and the heart is greater than rules and regulations. Following Chandidas, Bengal can teach the world the greatest ideal of personal freedom.

HARIMATI. (*looks at the river and thinks*). See, Gurudas, how beautifully the swans are rising and falling with the waves. (*pause*) You talked of personal freedom! My heart told me that you were mine and I was yours. That was enough for me. If I had obeyed my parents I would have been a hypocrite, as most of the conventionally married women are.

GURUDAS. Love is mysterious. I shook off my relatives and property, and you gave up your social position without the least hesitation.

HARIMATI. I like this free life. We will not think of the morrow. You will help me to give my body and mind to Krishna and His creatures, and I will help you to do the same. Love will bring its own restraint, and we will both be in Krishna's world as His playmates.

GURUDAS. No caste for a Vaishnava as all are equal playmates of Krishna. No property for a Vaishnava as he is a free man. No society for a Vaishnava as he is universal. No temple for a Vaishnava as Krishna is everywhere. No child for a Vaishnava as all children are his. (*pause*) It is extraordinary how we, who are really spirits, become self-forgetful and seek pleasure.

HARIMATI. I have in my mind a story about it—a story about Krishna's creation.

GURUDAS. What is it, Harimati?

HARIMATI. We, as spirits, were in Krishna's abode for eternity—we, all the living forms, beginning with the minutest worm up to the tallest man. Krishna was playing his flute and we were enjoying its charming melody. When Krishna played the tune of unity we all forgot our separate identities and became one. When Krishna played the tune of diversity we again assumed our forms. It was all bliss and joy. Then Krishna said to us one day, "We have been in bliss for eternity. This bliss is now stale, this harmony insipid. Let us produce something new. Let everything be opposed by every other thing in such a manner

that the hole thing is a muddle, otherwise there will be no joy." We all said, "Yes, Lord, we will do what you want us to do. We are your playmates." Krishna said, "Let some of us be murderers and some the murdered ; some of us robbers, some the robbed ; some of us thieves, and some those who suffer theft. Let some of us laugh and laugh until our hearts burst, and some cry and cry until our eyes are blind. Let some be lovers and some haters. Let some be saints and some sinners. Let there be some who will praise the saints and abuse the sinners. Let there be others who will praise the sinners and abuse the saints. But let there be a few wise people who will take all as my playmates." One of us said, "But then we will never come back here again." Krishna said, "We will have Love and Death for our new Drama, Love to remind us of unity and Death to remind us of unreality. Love teaching us unity and Death teaching us detachment, will make us free there as we are here. But those who remain unsatisfied there, will in the nick of time hear the note of my flute and come straight here again." So in the twinkling of an eye, the whole universe came into being. When Love and Death chasten us, we hear the flute-call of Krishna, and the Muddle of the universe becomes the Order of the universe.

GURUDAS. That is charming, Harimati. What a wonderful world it will be when we are all Krishna's playmates !

HARIMATI. In Krishna's world, those who love pleasure will enjoy pleasure to their heart's content, but not at the expense of others. Those who love possessions will possess things, but not by exploiting others. Those who love virtue will not sneer at those who love pleasure. Those who seek God will not think themselves superior to those who do not believe in Him.

GURUDAS. Oh, Harimati, that will be a world full of Krishna's love. (pause) Do you know what I dreamt last night ?

HARIMATI. What, Gûrudas ?

GURUDAS. I entered into a land in which everything was snow-white. Men, women, children, animals, birds, trees, grass—everything was as white as snow. Only Krishna was different. With his blue complexion and yellow clothes, he stood under a tree and played his flute. Oh the enchanting notes ! I said to myself that I was not going to look behind, not even for Harimati—and the dream broke.

HARIMATI. You are fortunate, Gurudas. But it is half-dream. Gauranga, our Lord, was the blending of Krishna and Radha. Perhaps you will dream of Radha to-night !

GURUDAS (*looks at the sky*). See the black clouds ! It may rain.

HARIMATI. Never mind. It will be either Krishna's mercy to us or Radha's tears for Krishna. Is there anything in the universe excepting Radha and Krishna ? (*looks at the sky*) Look, what a lovely game the moon is playing with the clouds. Krishna is doing the same with all of us.

GURUDAS. Yes. This is the essence of our faith. (*pause*) It is very late now, Harimati. We should go to sleep. It will be a glorious sleep in the open, the tree being our roof and the grass our bedstead. It will be a wonderful life of freedom when we get up in the morning.

They make two beds with their blankets. The clothes are rolled into small pillows. The clouds cover the moon and there is darkness. Harimati and Gurudas go to bed.

GURUDAS. Oh, Freedom, thou art my Krishna.

HARIMATI. Oh, Freedom, thou art my Radha.

GURUDAS. Radha-Krishna !

HARIMATI. Gaur-Nitai ! Gaur-Nitai !

They fall asleep. The darkness continues for a while. Then suddenly the clouds disappear and a beautiful moonlit grove is seen. Under a tree on the bank of a river, full to the brim, Radha reclines against a bush. She looks like a mad woman. Her female friends, Brinda, Chandra, Chitra, Lalita and Bishakha are anxiously looking at her—some fanning her, some massaging her. They all wear coloured saris and ornaments.

RADHA (*sighs*). O player of the flute, do come to me, else I die—

BRINDA (*anxiously*). What has suddenly happened to her, Lalita ? Oh, all our merriment has suddenly ended. With what joy we all came to visit the temple of Katyayani !—And now what trouble we have fallen into ! (*fans Radha*)

LALITA (*massaging Radha's hands*). Radha dear, tell me what has happened to you.

RADHA (*looks vacantly at Lalita*). Who are you ?

CHANDRA (*stroking Radha's head*). She is Lalita, my dear.

RADHA. O player of the flute, come to me—(*cries*)

CHITRA. The whole night is spoiled. I told you before not to take the terrible road on which the cursed tree stands. None of you listened to me. Now you see the result ! Radha is surely possessed by the ghost living in that tree.

BISHAKHA (*whispers to Chitra*). No, Chitra, she has fallen in love with a man. Her parents married her to Ayan whom she did not know at all, not to speak of loving him. But her mind has been full of the man she loves, and now she has become mad. Poor dear ! she looks like a love-sick woman.

CHANDRA. Do not be silly, Bishakha. She has a mild fit of apoplexy, I am sure. How far away is Ayan? Where are her sisters-in-law, Jatila and Kutila?

BRINDA. They are gathering flowers in the garden yonder for the worship in the temple. We left them there a little while ago, Chandra and Lalita, please go at once and tell them that Radha is ill. Let them come and do whatever is needed.

LALITA. Oh, Mother Katyayani, what trouble you have created for us!

Lalita and Chandra go out.

BRINDA. Radha, my love, what is the matter?

CHITRA. Tell us, my love, what has happened. Did you feel anything under that cursed tree?

BISHAKHA. Tell us frankly, my dear. We will not disclose anything to Ayan.

RADHA (*leaning on Brinda*). Oh, Brinda, I have heard the call of a flute. It is a heart-piercing voice without a form. Sometimes it calls me from the river, sometimes from the trees, sometimes from the grass. Sometimes it calls me from within myself, sometimes from within you all, sometimes from the cows and calves grazing in the field. Sometimes the sound comes from the sky, from the moon and the stars. I do not see the player of the flute. I only hear its melody. Now it sounds again. (*She listens.*) It is from the swans in the river. Oh, heartless player of the flute, do not play tricks on me. I pine, I pine for thee! Come—come to me. (*weeps*)

BRINDA (*wipes Radha's tears*). Oh, Radha, do not run after this unknown man. Ayan will be upset when he hears about it.

RADHA. Who is Ayan?

BISHAKHA. What! who is Ayan?—He is your husband.

RADHA. I have no husband, Bishakha.

CHITRA. Oh, Radha, do not be so foolish, my dear. What will our Community think?

RADHA. Be quiet. I have no Community.

BRINDA. Oh, Radha, do not go against our religion.

RADHA. I have no religion. (*She listens.*) Now it comes from the bushes. Oh, flute-player, my love, come to me. *Enter Ayan, Jatila, Kutila, Lalita and Chandra.*

AYAN (*anxiously*). What has happened to Radha? (*comes to Radha*) Oh, Radha dear, what is the matter with you?

RADHA (*laughs*). Ha! ha! hā! I am alone with you, my flute-player. No world—no men and women—oh, the calm! My flute-player, you are in me and I am in you. (*She turns her face and closes her eyes.*)

AYAN (*rubs Radha's forehead*). Radha, tell me what has happened.

RADHA (*looks round vacantly*). Who are you all? Please leave me alone.

JATILA. Oh, Ayan, she has fallen in love with a man. (*She looks suspiciously at Radha.*) I told you before not to marry her. But you became mad after her. People learn by their own experience. Now you see!

KUTILA (*looks suspiciously at Radha and pinches her hand*). How do you feel, Radha?

RADHA (*loudly*). Oh, she is pinching me. Oh, player of the flute, save me from this cunning woman.

KUTILA. Oh, Ayan, she is pretending. She wants money and ornaments from you.

AYAN. I know you are both jealous of her. (*angrily*) Hold your tongues. (*to Brinda*) Brinda, what can I do? Our house is far away.

BRINDA. Go and bring a physician. We will look after her.

AYAN. All right, I will go. (*goes out*)

RADHA. Oh, my player of the flute, I am so happy with you. (*She smiles and then closes her eyes.*)

BRINDA. What is really the matter?

LALITA. She must have heard something.

CHANDRA. It is extraordinary. We do not hear the flute. Only she hears it.

CHITRA. Mysterious are the ways of women, they say.

BISHAKHA. She is mad. Now she smiles, now she cries.

JATILA. You do not know. She never loved my brother. She is a crooked woman.

KUTILA. You never know the mind of a beautiful woman.

RADHA (*opens her eyes*). He has left me, he has left me. Oh, cruel player of the flute, thou heartless wretch!

BRINDA. I wish I could hear what Radha hears.

RADHA (*smiles*). Hush! he comes! he comes! Listen to his flute!

A beautiful tune is heard from a distance. All are charmed and look at one another.

RADHA. My beautiful voice, my joy, my love, my truth, where art thou ? (*closes her eyes*)

BRINDA. Where does it come from, Chitra ? It is making me mad.

LALITA. Oh, it tears my heart to pieces with joy. Oh, flute-player—(*She looks at the moon.*)

CHITRA. I am thrilled. I must go to him.

CHANDRA. Oh, beloved sound, where thou art, there is my home.

BISHAKHA. Oh, sweet-heart, may I die in you !

KUTILA. What is happening to me, Jatila ? I feel so open and frank—I feel I am at one with all.

JATILA. Kutila, I feel that all creatures are mine, intensely mine. The tune has made my life so simple !

The flute sounds again.

BRINDA. I know where it comes from. It comes from the heart of my husband. I must go to him. (*goes out*)

LALITA. It comes from the heart of my child, sleeping in my house. I must go to him at once. (*goes out*)

BISHAKHA. It comes from the hearts of the untouchable boys and girls living outside our village. I must run to them. (*goes out*)

CHITRA. It comes from the hearts of the fallen women of our district. I must be with them. Who cares for social convention ? (*goes out*)

CHANDRA. It comes from the heart of the tyrant king. I must go to him. (*goes out*)

KUTILA. Jatila, it comes from the hearts of the poor folk. I must go to serve them.

JATILA. Kutila, it comes from the hearts of all the insane people in the world. I must be with them. Let us go. (*They go out.*)

RADHA (*opens her eyes and looks around*). They have all left me ! Oh, player of the flute, where art thou ?

The flute sounds from the river.

RADHA (*looks at the river and smiles*). I have found you at last, my love. Oh, formless voice, thou art my God. Oh, my love, thou art Death—

She jumps into the river and is washed away by the tide. The clouds cover the moon. There is darkness for a time. When the

light returns, Gurudas and Harimati are seen sleeping under the trees.

GURUDAS (*moves the blanket from his breast*). Harimati, Harimati, I feel very nervous. I have had a terrible dream. Come to me.

HARIMATI (*gets up quickly, sits on Gurudas's bed, and begins to smooth his forehead*). What is the matter, my dear? Your forehead is covered with sweat! (*wipes the sweat with the hem of her sari*)

GURUDAS. I dreamt of Radha—a dreadful dream, Harimati.

HARIMATI. Do not be upset. No dream of Radha can ever be dreadful. What did you see?

GURUDAS. Oh, I feel so restless and anxious.

HARIMATI. Be calm, my dear. What have you seen?

GURUDAS. I dreamt of Radha drowning herself in the river. When all her friends had left her, she heard the call of the flute from the river, jumped into it, and (*weeping*) she was washed away. Oh, what a terrible dream! (*He trembles.*)

HARIMATI (*wipes Gurudas's tears*). Do you not know yet, Gurudas, that the whole universe is Radha? Radha went to herself and became one with Krishna.

GURUDAS. Perhaps. Poor Ayan! he went away to bring a physician to treat Radha! When he came back he would not find anyone there. (*weeps*).

HARIMATI (*smiles and wipes Gurudas's tears*). A tender Vaishnava indeed! Is not Ayan Krishna in another form? It is all Krishna's sport, his Lila.

GURUDAS (*brightens up*). Now I see! Yes, it is all Krishna's Lila! I wonder if this dream is true—

HARIMATI. They say that the dream seen in the early morning is always true. You are fortunate.

GURUDAS. Radha-Krishna! Radha-Krishna!

HARIMATI. We will have a chosen corner in our cottage in which we will keep the images of Radha and Krishna, Krishna playing the flute and Radha listening to it. In their name we will have a small garden whose flowers we will never pluck. You will beg alms every day, and I will cook for Radha and Krishna. We will eat what is offered to them. We will lead a simple life, worshipping Radha and Krishna. When we die, we will go to Radha-Krishna's abode and remain eternally there as their playmates. (*A cock crows.*) Krishna's flute calls us to pray.

GURUDAS. What! Krishna's flute! (*The cock crows again.*)

HARIMATI. Yes, Krishna's flute. Every sound in nature is an echo of Krishna's flute. It is time to tell the beads. (*She gets up and washes her eyes and mouth with the water from the pot. She pours some water on the palm of her hand and jokingly sprinkles it on the face of Gurudas.*) Get up, lazy man, and tell your beads. (*She sits on her bed with her rosary.*)

GURUDAS, Harimati. You are wise. (*Gets up*)

CURTAIN

THE DISCIPLES

The latter part of the seventeenth century. Early afternoon. A forest in the Narmada valley. An open space in front of a bamboo hut on the top of a hill. It is surrounded by dense forest on all sides except the front, which is on the edge of the hill. A track leading into the forest is visible on each side of the open space. Guru Govind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, is sweeping the ground in front of his hut with a besom. He has long hair, moustache and beard, and wears an ochre-coloured loin-cloth. The upper part of his body is bare, and he has no footwear. Jagu, a hill-tribe man, enters along one of the tracks with a small basket in his hand. He wears only a small piece of cloth.

JAGU (*goes to Guru Govind, kneels down and bows, putting the basket on the ground*). Glory to the Guru!

GURU GOVIND (*smiling, stands up with the besom in his hands*). Glory to Jagu!

JAGU (*remains kneeling*). You always joke with me.

GURU GOVIND. May the blessings of all the Gurus be on you!

JAGU (*takes the basket and gets up*). Miki, my sister, sends this offering to you.

GURU GOVIND. What beautiful cherries! May the Gurus bless Miki! Put them inside the door. (*Jagu puts the basket inside the door.*) Where did she get them, Jagu? (*sweeps*)

JAGU. Far away from here in the dense forest there is a big cherry tree. She climbed it and gathered the fruits for you.

GURU GOVIND. A brave woman! When I go back to Panchanada, I will ask all my women disciples to be as brave as Miki. (*goes on sweeping*)

JAGU. May I have the broom and sweep, Master!

GURU GOVIND. Never mind. There is only a little more to do. I will finish it in the twinkling of an eye. (*jokingly*) One should never leave one's job to others. (*sweeps*)

JAGU. You are leaving the hut to-day, and yet you are sweeping with as much care as if you were living here permanently.

GURU GOVIND. I saw your tribal dance the other day. You, Miki, Hana and others danced so beautifully! Why do you dance? (*sweeps*)

JAGU. We forget everything when we dance. Oh, the joy! Sometimes we dance day and night. Who cares for food and sleep then! We dance for the sake of dancing.

GURU GOVIND. My work is my dance, Jagu. I work for the sake of working, as you dance for the sake of dancing. Oh, the joy! As I sweep, I feel as if I am sweeping my mind and cleaning it. A little work like this teaches me to rely on myself and to love the poor. (*finishes sweeping and puts the besom in the corner*)

JAGU. Sometimes we go to the villages outside the forest to sell firewood. People are so queer there! Some of them put on nice clothes and just sit still! I wonder if they ever walk! There are others who sweep and work and plough day in and day out for those who sit idle. They all seem so ugly to us and appear to have no joy in life.

GURU GOVIND. Oh, Jagu, do not tell me about those idle people. They are either dead or they have one foot in the grave. I became tired of them and came to you in the forest.

JAGU. We laugh at the women there, who are always inside the houses. They never come out to work with the men. We are amazed to find that a few people have taken away all the good things for themselves, and the rest are poor and unhappy. But look at our forest life. We—men, women and children—work, sing and dance together. There, women, when they marry, leave their homes and take the names of the men who look after them. But with us, the women of one tribe marry the men of another tribe without changing their names and their homes. There the children are known by the names of their fathers. But here the children are known by the names of their mothers who look after themselves.

GURU GOVIND. The pure and free life that you lead here has opened my eyes, Jagu. For fifteen long years I have been in the quiet of this forest under the affectionate care of your tribe. Now by the blessings of God the period of quiet is over. I hear the call of the world. I must go. The hour of my departure this afternoon is an auspicious one for me.

JAGU. Do not forget us, Master. Oh, how can we live here without you? (*weeps*)

GURU GOVIND (*wiping Jagu's tears with his fingers*). Do not be unmanly, Jagu. Be brave. Be true to your tribe. Do not behave like the weak people in villages and towns. Life is fun. Death is fun. My life is for work—for my disciples.

JAGU. We are also your disciples. Why should you leave us?

GURU GOVIND. I will be here as well as there. Whenever I am tired, I will come to you to have rest and gain fresh energy. How eagerly I am waiting for Ramdas to come and take me

from here to-day ! How I am looking forward to a life of activity !

JAGU. Master, yesterday I met a Sadhu on the bank of the river. He enquired about you and wanted to see you.

GURU GOVIND. Will he come here before Ramdas arrives ? How long has he been in the forest ?

JAGU. I do not know. But he is not like you.

GURU GOVIND. What do you mean ?

JAGU. Sadhus like him come to beg food from us, sometimes by cajoling us, sometimes by frightening us. They do not mix with us as you do.

GURU GOVIND. But they pray for you, do they not ?

JAGU. Yes, they pray for us and we give them food. (pause) What will you do, Master, after your return to your other disciples ?

GURU GOVIND. I must bring a new life to them. I must make all my disciples, men and women, equal and free. Jagu, I have found a way to make them so.

JAGU. What way, Master ? We will follow it here.

GURU GOVIND. They will have a huge basin full of water into which they will put a lot of sugar to make it sweet. They will stir the water and the sugar with a sword to prepare a delicious drink. In sharing this drink they will learn freedom and equality. This will be their initiation, and they will at once become pure men and women, ready to live and die for great things.

JAGU. How lovely ! Allow us, Master, to have a basin like this. We will then drink and sing and dance round it.

GURU GOVIND. You are free and equal. You do not need any basin. Listen to what I shall do after that.

JAGU (*inquisitively*). What, Master ?

GURU GOVIND. I will ask each of them to wear an iron bangle to remind him of a hard life ; to have a sword for protection ; and to wear long hair so that he may be simple and natural.

JAGU. Master, I should like to come with you to enjoy the fun.

GURU GOVIND. No, you must be here with your tribe. I shall feel sorry if you give up the pure and simple life of the forest, Jagu. I am going to lead a life of constant danger. You see, our great Master, Nanak, was a peaceful teacher. He taught people to love their Maker and their fellow-beings. All his followers became known as Sikhs, the disciples, and began to lead a life of prayer as harmless peasants. After Nanak,

other great teachers came to look after the disciples, old and new. But the disciples could not enjoy peace for long, because the emperors in Delhi became angry with them. A great Guru was tortured to death. My own father was beheaded.

JAGU. How cruel! Your father was killed?

GURU GOVIND. Yes—and do you know what he said at the time of his death?

JAGU. What did he say?

GURU GOVIND. He said, "I give my head but not my faith. I was only nine years old then, and I made a vow that my life should be for the sake of the faith for which my father died. At an early age I took to a life of fighting for the sake of my disciples. But suddenly I felt that only in silence could I get strength from God for more effort. So I left everything and came to this forest, and I have been here for fifteen years.

JAGU. What a life you have passed through, Master! More thrilling than our life of song and dance!

GURU GOVIND. My heart is leaping with joy to-day. Soon I shall plunge into an ocean of work with my disciples. No quiet, no rest, no silence for me any longer—only work, work, work—

A VOICE from the distance. Glory to the Guru!

GURU GOVIND. Who is there? It does not sound like Ramdas.

JAGU (*goes behind the trees and looks below*). The Sadhu I saw yesterday is coming to you. I will leave you alone, Master. I am going to the forest for a while.

GURU GOVIND. Do not be long, Jagu. (*Jagu goes out along a track.*)

Enter the Sadhu. He wears an ochre-coloured loin-cloth and a piece of cloth wrapped round him. He has a stick in one hand and a water-pot in the other.

SADHU. Victory to the Guru!

GURU GOVIND. Glory to God and to the Sadhus!

Guru Govind spreads two small mats on the door-step of the hut.

GURU GOVIND. Please be seated, sir. (*They both sit down.*) It is my good fortune to have a Sadhu's blessing on the eve of my departure from this place. I have been here for fifteen years, and I leave to-day to enter into a life of action. May I know who you are, sir?

SADHU. A wandering Sadhu. In my youth I read the Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs. I read with interest

the story of the first Guru, Nanak. The tale of his travels to Mecca in the west, Ceylon in the south and Benares in the east thrilled me, and I decided to pass my whole life in travelling. I follow the way of the stream which flows without stopping, and I roam about from place to place. When I heard that the tenth Guru was here in his hut, I made up my mind to see him. So I am here.

GURU GOVIND. That is interesting. It is a pleasure and a privilege to meet a follower of the first Guru. I would have been happy to be with you for some days, if I were staying here longer.

SADHU. I value the kindness of the Guru. But I do not stay in any place for more than three nights. It is a vow, and I must find a new place outside the forest for to-night.

GURU GOVIND. Why do you not stay at any place for more than three nights, sir?

SADHU. "A sadhu should roam as the water flows"—so it is said. I like to remain detached. My only interest is in God.

GURU GOVIND. How different we are, although we both revere Guru Nanak! My own interest is in man, the would-be God, and I came here to receive God's blessing for the fulfilment of my mission.

SADHAU. What mission? °

GURU GOVIND. The mission of organising my disciples into a military nation, strong enough to defend itself and enjoy freedom of worship.

SADHU. I wonder if Guru Nanak would ever have defended himself. I cannot imagine Guru Arjun, who was tortured to death, or your own father, Teg Bahadur, who died a hero's death for his faith, seeking self-defence. I imagine that they would have lived up to their ideas, whatever the circumstances. (pause) The world is very slow in understanding the value of such great sacrifice because it bears fruit slowly, although surely.

GURU GOVIND. Everyone cannot be Teg Bahadur. Everyone cannot be Guru Arjun. My mission is to change the teachings of the Gurus into a faith for the common man.

SADHU. I believe that what has been tried by one, can be tried by all, in time. No one has attempted to make the faith of your father the faith for all Sikhs.

GURU GOVIND. Too high an ideal oppresses the people. It teaches them self-reproach and demoralises them. My mission is to build a vigorous community.

SADHU. At Surat I once met a foreign merchant who could speak our language. He told me of the great Saviour Jesus, and

his disciples—how they refused to defend themselves and gave up their lives for truth. Their sacrifice released such moral power that a great empire, opposed to them, became converted to their faith. The story reminds me of Guru Nanak, Guru Arjun and Teg Bahadur. If the followers of Jesus could bring a great empire to their faith, why should not the followers of the Gurus convert the Moghul Empire? If a sincere attempt is made, I think the Sikhs can convert the whole of India to their faith.

GURU GOVIND. Do you think it is possible?

SADHU. It is my firm conviction. Guru Nanak's faith blends the best of Islam and Hinduism. His faith has the power to bring together the Hindus and the Muslims. But it can only be accomplished by sacrifice, and not by force.

GURU GOVIND. A defenceless community should not deceive itself. If it follows wild ideas it will never be self-reliant.

SADHU. I have travelled throughout India. There is dissatisfaction everywhere. I am sure that the Moghul Empire will collapse after Aurungzeb. But what will replace it? There is no idealism in the country to bind the people together. The races, sects and communities are busy with their own affairs. I am afraid the whole country will crumble into pieces, and the law of the jungle will rule. India can be saved only by Nanak's ideals of peace, tolerance and fellowship. Can you create that moral power which will bring together the Sikhs, the Rajputs, the Mahrattas and the Muslims? That is the task before you, and only the followers of Nanak can accomplish it.

GURU GOVIND. It is only by strengthening my own community that I can work for the unity of India. If my disciples become a military race, they will be able to unify India. Peace will be their ideal, and violence will only be used for a great purpose and for defence.

Jagu quietly enters with flowers, and, sitting in a corner, he begins to make a garland.

SADHU. Violence is a gamble because you do not know which party is going to be the stronger. It is deceptive because violence for defence often changes into violence for offence. It is immoral because it demoralises the party using it. Nanak's path is a path of service and suffering, ennobling to all. It is the path of Guru Arjun and Guru Teg Bahadur. We can be free and safe when the whole world is free and safe. I do not think your violent means will succeed. Your disciples may become intolerant, aggressive and worldly-minded. They may forget the wisdom of the Gurus as soon as you die. Then one small group may fall upon another. Perhaps in course

of time some great statesman will arise to unite them and build a temporary kingdom. But such a kingdom will not last. It will not be Nanak's kingdom of God on earth, but a kingdom held by force. In its turn it may succumb to a higher military power. The descendants of your disciples may sell their valour to a stronger people. *(pause)* I wonder if mankind will ever be free from this game of power!

GURU GOVIND. You make me think!

SADHU. If all the Sikhs follow your father's way, the religion of Nanak will one day cover the whole of India and establish peace. It will be such a unifying force that a new India will arise after the fall of the Moghul Empire.

GURU GOVIND *(thoughtfully)*. My father's way or my way? Cool-headed sacrifice of one's life to change the heart of one's opponent, or adventure whose result is known to none? I must have time to think.

SADHU. May victory be to the tenth Guru! Think for yourself, and decide. It is not my object to hinder you. Nanak's teachings tell me not to disturb even the dust of the road.

GURU GOVIND. You have disturbed me indeed!

SADHU. I have only told you the truth as I know it. Perhaps I have delayed you too long. I like to be a free bird to fly from place to place and sing the song of freedom and peace. I am not a reformer. I think it is pride that makes one a reformer. Is it not God's world, and is He not looking after it?

GURU GOVIND. You say it is pride that makes one a reformer!

SADHU. One can be a true reformer only through the grace of the Divine Mother. Authority must come from Her. If you have the Mother's grace, you can lead the whole of India. *(pause)* It is time for me to go. Glory to the Guru!

GURU GOVIND. Kindly wait for a moment, sir. *(brings the basket of cherries and offers it to the Sadhu)* Please take this humble offering for your evening meal.

SADHU *(takes the cherries from the basket and puts them in his water-pot)*. May the Divine Mother bless you!

GURU GOVIND. Glory to God and to the Sadhus!

SADHU. Victory to the Guru. Farewell! *(goes out)*

Guru Govind thoughtfully walks for a while. Jagu, with the flowers, comes to him.

GURU GOVIND. What are you doing, Jagu?

JAGU. I am making a garland. When all the members of our tribe come to meet you on the bank of the river, we will give it to you.

GURU GOVIND. So you think that I am going away to-day !
(*Jagu looks at him, astonished*). What if I do not go ?

JAGU. Oh, what joy it will be to all of us ! We will pass the whole night in dancing and singing. (*pause*) I know you are joking with me.

Enter Ramdas, a disciple of the Guru. He wears a dhoti, a shirt and a turban.

RAMDAS. Victory to the Guru ! (*bows down and remains in a kneeling posture.*)

GURU GOVIND. Glory to the Gurus, glory to the Holy Book and victory to the disciples !

JAGU (*bows before Ramdas*). You have come to take away our Guru. No, we are not going to give him to you.

RAMDAS. Jagu, you have kept him here for fifteen years. Now it is our turn. Thousands and thousands of men and women are waiting for him in Panchanada.

GURU GOVIND. Did you have a comfortable journey, Ramdas ?

RAMDAS. Yes, Master. Late in the morning I came to a tribe living on the fringe of the forest. They received me kindly and gave me a good meal. I have arranged with them for you to have a few hours' sleep there. Then we will begin our journey at midnight with five followers. The districts outside the forest are full of spies, so we have to travel at night and rest during the day.

GURU GOVIND. Ramdas, you know that silent preparation for a great work is higher than action undertaken without thought.

RAMDAS. Certainly, Master.

GURU GOVIND. My preparation is not yet complete.

RAMDAS. What do you mean, Master ?

GURU GOVIND. I feel I should not go back unprepared.

RAMDAS. Thousands and thousands of men and women are just waiting for one hint from you. They are ready to lay down their lives for your cause.

GURU GOVIND. I have changed my mind, Ramdas. Give my blessings to the people and ask them to wait for another five years.

GURU GOVIND. Yes, I need another five years of prayer and silence, of communion with the plants and trees and animals of this forest, of fellowship with the simple folk of Jagu's tribe. (*to Jagu*) Jagu, I should like to accept the hospitality of your tribe for another five years and be under the affectionate care of you, Hana and Miki.

JAGU. Oh, what joy ! Master, I must go and tell this good news at once.

GURU GOVIND. Go, then—

JAGU (*bows down before the Guru*). Glory to the Guru ! (*takes the flowers and the garland, and runs away in high glee. Ramdas is sad and thoughtful.*)

RAMDAS. Master !

GURU GOVIND. Be of good cheer, Ramdas. Our great task is to build a community as Guru Nanak wanted it. Our fight is not a worldly fight. Our fight is for freedom of conscience, and a free community. Our work cannot stop until the whole world has accepted the ideal of Nanak.

RAMDAS. Defence of life and honour is the first question, Master.

GURU GOVIND. To us, the followers of Guru Nanak, life and honour are means—not ends. If we forget this, ours will be a mad pursuit. I shall not leave this seclusion until I have received the command of the Divine Mother. In the meantime, I want my disciples to be of one will. I want them to combine all their wills into a common will. There will be no other Guru after me.

RAMDAS. Who will guide us if there is no Guru ? Who will unite our efforts ?

GURU GOVIND. The disciples must learn to find the Guru within themselves. The common will of the disciples must decide all matters. The Holy Book must be their guide. Each disciple must be a Khalsa—a pure soul.

RAMDAS. What a great message ! May we be worthy of it !

GURU GOVIND. I expect you all to follow my plan until I return to you. I will then initiate you all, and you will become Khalsas.

RAMDAS. How shall we live, and what shall we do in your absence for the next five years ?

GURU GOVIND. Guru Nanak says that death is the privilege of brave men, if they know how to die for a just cause. My disciples should learn to die gladly for an ideal, without feeling hatred or malice. It is fanaticism to die for worldly ambition.

RAMDAS. What is the just cause ?

GURU GOVIND. Guru Nanak says, "The world is the True One's akode. The True One lives in it. In all orders of being is the True One's light." The just cause is the cause of the peace and happiness of all. We must build the True One's abode

first in Panchanada, then in the whole of India and then throughout the world.

RAMDAS. It is so difficult, Master, to think about the whole country and the world, when we are passing through a life and death struggle.

GURU GOVIND. "Patience is the virtue of the angels," says the first Guru. Let my disciples be God's servants. Let them break the bonds of worldliness, and eat and drink moderately. Let them know that sweetness and humility are the essence of virtue. Tell them that all men are equal. Caste is nonsense. False fame is nonsense. No one is devoid of some worth. Let men and women stand on equal footing. How can you call woman inferior, when it is she who gives birth to great men?

RAMDAS. The community is not as you left it, Master. In your absence many problems have arisen. We hoped that your presence would solve them.

GURU GOVIND. Do not be disheartened. Go and preach the gospel of equality. Those alone have found the true way who enjoy the fruit of their own labour, and share it with others. One who follows the Gurus is merciful to living beings. Ask my disciples to avoid customs which make one forget the truth.

RAMDAS. Is our desire to build a State under your leadership a vain dream?

GURU GOVIND. My kingdom is Guru Nanak's kingdom, which allows no false adventure. I must feel it within myself, and so I ask you to leave me here for another five years. I must surrender myself to the Divine Mother in order to receive Her command. She knows my future. May all the Gurus bless you! Go and give my message to the disciples.

RAMDAS (*bows down before the Guru and then kneels*). Master!

GURU GOVIND (*touches Ramdas's head*). Ramdas, I want you to go back cheerfully. May the Divine Mother bless you!

RAMDAS. May I ever remain true to you! To love you is to love your cause. (*stands up, ready to go*) Victory to the Guru!

GURU GOVIND. The common will of the disciples is the Guru. Victory to the disciples!

Ramdas goes out slowly along the track. Guru Govind remains quiet for a while. Then he spreads the mat on the ground, kneels in the heroic posture and closes his eyes to meditate.

CURTAIN

ALL-PROPHETS DAY

The year 1950 ! Early afternoon in Bombay. A furnished room on the second storey of a magnificent house belonging to an industrialist. The door on the right leads to the hall, and the door on the left leads to a staircase descending to the garden. On the back wall are hung two large pictures, one of Edward the Seventh, and the other of Goddess Lakshmi. There is a settee on each side of the room. Close to the back wall is a round mahogany table, about a dozen chairs matching the table are scattered here and there. The two windows in the left wall are shut. On the table are a file and two attache cases. Mamtaaz and Gauri, the Muslim and Hindu joint secretaries of a Fellowship Club, are busy dusting the chairs. Their hair is bobbed and they have plastic bracelets on their wrists. Each wears a short piece of coloured cloth wrapped round the waist and buttoned in the form of a skirt, a loose jacket reaching to the knees, and sandals.

MAMTAZ (*dusting the chairs*). Dust—dust—dust—

GAURI (*dusting the table*). It seems as if the room hasn't been used for ages !

MAMTAZ. They have large buildings with so many unused rooms, and millions of people in the city and the country have no place to lay their heads ! Shame !

GAURI. I wonder if the City Corporation will ever take over these unused buildings.

MAMTAZ. I wonder if land will ever be socialised and shared among the village communities. Every fifty families can then form a house-building co-operative ; and its members, the carpenters, bricklayers, peasants and workers, can build houses for themselves at a very low cost. (*dusts*)

GAURI. What a stuffy room it is ! See, the windows are shut. Open them, Mamtaaz.

MAMTAZ (*opening the windows*). The porter has swept the carpet. But he hadn't the sense to open the windows. Like master, like servant !—And look there ! (*shows Gauri the two pictures*) Emperor Edward the Seventh ! It should go to the Museum. Who is the other, Gauri ? She doesn't look much like Empress Alexandra !

GAURI (*shaking with laughter*). Oh, you make me laugh !

MAMTAZ (*innocently*). What is the matter ?

GAURI. She is the Hindu Goddess Lakshmi, the giver of wealth.

MAMTAZ. Has she made the Sheth what he is ?

GAURI. Perhaps. I would rather have a Goddess of equality, a Goddess of harmony or a Goddess of peace. To me Lakshmi reflects the mind of a society divided into the rich and the poor. "Where there are snakes, there is a snake-Goddess," they say.

MAMTAZ. I think these Gods and Goddesses of your Community make the people fatalists, and lead their minds away from things of social importance.

GAURI. Some people say so. Anyhow, our Fellowship Club should not show any religious or political bias. We must preserve a neutral platform as we have invited the representatives of different faiths. It is better to take the pictures away. Let me call the porter. (*opens the door leading to the hall and goes out*) Porter, porter—

PORTER (*from below*). Yes, Madam.

GAURI. Please come here. (*She comes in and shuts the door.*)

MAMTAZ. In the republican India of our dreams, there will be no room for an Emperor or King. We want to have a regional republic for each group of people speaking the same language. I should like to see small regional republics among the hill tribes of Assam as well.

GAURI. There is a great gulf between the ideal and the real, Mamtaaz.

Enter the Porter.

GAURI. Will you please take away these two pictures?

PORTER. The Sheth likes to have them there, Madam. The picture of Edward the Seventh was fixed there by his grandfather when a great white Sahib visited this house. I was a little boy then, and I remember how all the people were turned out of the road as the Sahib's car came along. The other picture was put there by his father. It is Mother Lakshmi. (*looks at the picture, joins his palms and bends his head to show respect*)

GAURI. The Sheth is very kindly allowing us to use this room in our own way, porter. Will you kindly take them away for this afternoon?

PORTER. All right, Madam. (*He puts a small chair upon a large one and takes down the pictures.*)

MAMTAZ. We will call you again when we need your help.

PORTER. Yes, Madam. I shall be downstairs. (*goes out with the pictures. Gauri and Mamtaaz dust the two settees.*)

ALL - PROPHETS DAY

GAURI. Delightful settees! Come, Mamta, let us sit for a while. (*They sit on the settee.*) I wonder if India will ever be unified!

MAMTA. It is the task of the workers and the peasants of India to make her one and establish real peace. The upper and middle classes have failed dismally.

GAURI. They have failed in India just as in all the other countries. It is the task of the common people to establish peace in the world.

MAMTA. Peace in India is linked with peace in all other countries. See what a serious turn the struggle between the Haves and the Have-nots in each country is taking. I think three conditions must be satisfied if peace is to be achieved.

GAURI. What are they, Mamta?

MAMTA. There must be working-class unity in the U.S.A. to ensure world peace. The scientists should declare that they will not co-operate with their Governments, if atomic energy is used for destructive purposes. Thirdly, Britain should remain neutral. It will be a great service to mankind, if all the pacifist movements in Great Britain can combine into a single Peace Movement.

GAURI. What about a dynamic pacifism in India?

MAMTA. I believe that dynamic pacifism is the essence of all the great cultures of India. The peasants and workers can bring about a social revolution quite peacefully, if they have discipline and idealism.

GAURI. I don't see any sign of it. Look at the events of the last four or five years. It is the common people who suffered most in the communal riots. They now understand that they have been deceived by ambitious people. They now realise that they have interests opposed to those of the upper classes. I think the communal riots awakened the masses. Unfortunately this awakening at last led to the strike wave throughout the country. See how the spirit of violence is spreading like wild-fire again! I wonder if the workers and peasants are not falling out of the frying pan into the fire.

MAMTA. I honestly believe that it is in the power of the upper classes to stop the strike wave, if they voluntarily come down to the level of the people. Where are the leaders of the great religions now? Why do they not ask their followers to act according to the ideal of brotherhood? Didn't all the prophets preach brotherhood?

GAURI. They did, but who cares for it? Anyhow, this is perhaps our last attempt at this All-Prophets Day. If the repre-

sentatives of the great faiths approve of the appeal we are sending out, there may be a peaceful settlement.

MAMTAZ. Let us hope so. *(pause)* It's getting late. We must have our lunch now, Gauri, before Grandpa comes. When he takes the chair at a meeting, he keeps us so busy!

GAURI. Yes, let us eat.

They sit at the round table, open their attache cases and take out two plates, two bottles of water and two small glasses.

MAMTAZ. I have some dal rissoles and chapaties, Gauri. *(takes them out)*

GAURI. That's fine. I have boiled potatoes and carrots and some puris. *(takes them out)*

MAMTAZ. You shall have some of mine, and I will have some of yours, and there will be plenty for both of us. Here is something more. *(takes out two bananas)*

GAURI. And look what I have! *(takes out two oranges)*
They begin to eat.

GAURI. How glorious it will be when all Hindu and Muslim women eat together as we are doing here to-day. We all accept vegetarian food, and if we eat it together there will be no difficulty.

MAMTAZ. Such meals are very common now in cities and towns. But they must reach the villages. Yes, Gauri, we women can do a lot to solve the problems of food and clothing.

GAURI. Have another rissole. *(serves one to Mamtaaz)*
What do you suggest?

MAMTAZ. Women working with men in the fields and kitchen gardens can double the production of vegetables. If all women wear clothes like yours and mine, and if all men copy Grandpa, there will be no cloth problem in India.

GAURI. If all women wear plastic ornaments as we do, and give their gold and silver jewellery to the Central Bank, what a great service it will be to the Nation!

MAMTAZ. Please have a banana. *(gives one to Gauri)*

GAURI. Please have an orange. *(gives one to Mamtaaz)*

MAMTAZ. But rest assured, women are not going to copy our bobbed hair. They will say we have borrowed the fashion from the West.

GAURI. I think they will sooner or later realise that it is better for health, and less trouble.

MAMTAZ. I hope they will realise it soon. *(They finish their meal, pack up the things and come to the window.)*

GAURI. By the way, Mamtaaz, how long have you been a vegetarian?

MAMTAZ (*very calmly*). Since that fateful night in Lahore, Gauri, when my parents were killed in the communal riot of 1947. When the rioters came into our house, I was hidden in a corner. My parents were pulled out of the house. I heard their shrieks, but had not the courage to face the hooligans. When everything was over, I was numbed. I looked for their bodies but could not find them. The stairs were covered with blood. I left the house at dead of night. Allah gave me a wonderful calm, and suddenly I felt that I had no enemy in the world. It was a unique experience, and I took a vow to lead a harmless life. A relief society helped me to go to Lucknow to my aunt.

GAURI. What a sad story!

MAMTAZ. My spiritual companion was the beautiful Sufi book, Masnavi by Rumi. He says that man can transmit his moral nature to animals. This passage also acted on my life very powerfully. So I became a vegetarian.

GAURI. Yes, we learn harmlessness through our own suffering. (*pause*) Have you heard from Hamid?

MAMTAZ. Yes, he is quite well in Madras.

GAURI. He will make you happy, when you are both married.

MAMTAZ. Don't be silly. I look upon him as my brother, and I have chosen a different life.

GAURI. What do you mean?

MAMTAZ. Some years ago I heard a speech in London on the Islamic Saints. I was so much touched by the life and teachings of Rabeya! She said that she couldn't give her life to a man because she had given it to Allah. I thought it over and decided to devote my life to the service of Allah and his creatures. I should like to help Grandpa in his work.

GAURI. It's a lovely idea, Mamtaaz, if it makes you happy.

MAMTAZ. And what about you? How is Tej Singh?

GAURI. He is very orthodox. I told him that I am a believer in civil marriage, and that I don't want to change my name. When I said that a woman should never feel helpless, and that she must be free to divorce whenever she wishes to do so, he was very much upset.

MAMTAZ. Why do you want easy divorce for women, Gauri?

GAURI. Because only in this way can women be liberated.

MAMTAZ. Will it not make them fickle-minded?

GAURI. I don't like women to be good through compulsion. I should like to see them economically independent and choosing freely the best things of life.

MAMTAZ. And what did Tej Singh say ?

GAURI. Poor boy ! He began to cry. But I remained firm. *(pause)* Mamtaaz, it's time for Grandpa to come. Let us arrange the room. He is so punctual. *(They arrange the chairs on the right and left sides and at the back of the table.)*

MAMTAZ. What a quiet worker Grandpa is ! He has given his life to his country and culture. But Gauri, I am afraid to suggest anything to him. Sometimes he seems to get angry without reason.

GAURI. Poor old chap ! He lost his only son some years ago. Never mind, Mamtaaz. We are proud to have the opportunity of helping him in this Fellowship.

MAMTAZ. Yes, we are proud. *(a knock at the door)* Here he comes.—

Enter the President of the Fellowship Club. He is 75 years of age. He wears a short piece of cloth without border, a loose shirt and sandals. Gauri and Mamtaaz stand up respectfully.

PRESIDENT. Hello, girls !

GAURI *(joins her palms)*. Namaste, Grandpa.

MAMTAZ. Salaam, Grandpa. *(touches her forehead with the fingers of her right hand)*

PRESIDENT. How do you do ? Is everything ready ?

MAMTAZ. Are you pleased with the arrangement ?

PRESIDENT. The room looks very nice. How dirty it was when I came to see it the other day ! *(looks at the wall)* Where are the pictures ?

GAURI. We asked the porter to take them away.

PRESIDENT. Thank you. I forgot to tell you about them. What about the resolution ? Have you a dozen typewritten copies ?

MAMTAZ. Yes, Grandpa. Here they are. *(opens the file and gives a copy to the President)*

PRESIDENT *(angrily)*. What is this carelessness ? Why not double-spacing all through ? *(Mamtaaz looks at Gauri, and they both wink.)* We should do everything perfectly.

MAMTAZ. Very sorry, Grandpa.

PRESIDENT *(calmly)*. Never mind. We will manage with this. *(smiling)* I never have faith in young girls.

GAURI. Why, Grandpa ?

MAMTAZ. Yes, we all know old men like old women.

PRESIDENT. Young women join public activities to choose young men and they suddenly vanish.

MAMTAZ. We are the new girls of the new India. We are made of sterner stuff, Grandpa, rest assured.

GAURI. We are not of Grandma's type.

MAMTAZ. You will get to know us when the hour comes.

PRESIDENT. When it comes I shall be proud. (*pause*) Have you seen this afternoon's paper?

GAURI. No. What does it say?

PRESIDENT. The situation is very serious throughout the country. The peasants are joining the workers everywhere, and they are bent on seizing power and bringing about a social revolution.

GAURI. It is the fault of the rich.

MAMTAZ. The whole system is based on violence. The peasants and workers have every right to be violent, if we fail to show them a better way.

PRESIDENT. What! Are you defending violence?

MAMTAZ. No, Grandpa. Nether shall I defend cowardice on the part of the peasants and workers.

PRESIDENT. The resolution we have drafted is timely indeed.

GAURI. We must go direct to the people. We must tell the workers and peasants not to forget the non-violent message of great cultures of India. We must also tell them that if they withdraw their support, the whole system which keeps them down will collapse like a house of cards.

MAMTAZ. Do you really believe, Grandpa, that the upper classes will pay heed to our appeal and accept the spiritual equality of all?

PRESIDENT. If the powerful groups listen to our appeal, I am confident that India will show a noble ideal before mankind. The right answer to modern communism is neither the capitalism of America nor the social democracy of Britain, but a communist society, based on non-violence. It will be a society in which culture and conscience will be free, but political and economic life carefully planned; in which freedom will not be sought for wrong purposes, and conscience will not be the voice of the selfish ego. The contradictions of the political systems will meet on a higher level in such a free society. I am sure India is capable of realising such an ideal. It is the essence of all the great cultures which flourish in India. She can serve herself and the world only by remaining true to her soul.

MAMTAZ. Oh, Grandpa, people will call you mad.

PRESIDENT. Does it matter, my child? I have already

lived too long. The other world is calling me. I must say my say before I close my eyes.

GAURI. Will this new India ever come, Grandpa?

PRESIDENT. Never, my good girl, until young women like you cease from running after young men.

MAMTAZ. Never, Grandpa, until old men and old women show better examples to young people.

PRESIDENT (*affectionately*). You are a cheeky girl! Any how, we are going to achieve great things to-day when the representatives of all faiths meet here.

MAMTAZ. Do not be angry, Grandpa, if I am frank. You will achieve nothing. Each will magnify his own faith. You will see.

Knocks at the door are heard. Enter the Vicar, the Marxist, the Sardar and the Rabbi. The President, Mamtaaz and Gauri rise from their chairs.

PRESIDENT. Come in, please. It is very good of you to come. Please sit down. You know our two secretaries?

THE MARXIST. Of course we know them. They are well-known in India through the Unity Congress that was held this year.

THE VICAR. It is a great pleasure to join a good cause.

THE RABBI. It is an excellent work to bring us all together.

THE SARDAR (*to Gauri*). I shall be very glad to be of any use at the meeting.

GAURI. It is very kind of you. Our treasurer is absent. Please take the collection on his behalf.

PRESIDENT. What is the time, Mamtaaz?

MAMTAZ (*looks at her watch*). Nearly half-past three.

Enter Purohitji, the Mullah Saheb, the Dastur and the Nationalist. All rise from their seats.

PRESIDENT. Please come and sit down. (*They all sit down.*)

PUROHITJI. I wonder if this celebration is not ill-timed. I hear the strikers are very unruly in different parts of Bombay.

PRESIDENT. This part is quiet, Purohitji.

MAMTAZ. It is time to begin the meeting.

PRESIDENT. Let us commence then. (*takes the Chairman's seat*) Friends, I greet you all on behalf of the Fellowship Club at this celebration of All-Prophets Day. It is only through mutual give-and-take that we can make India one. All the prophets tell us that human nature is divine. They all teach us simplicity, harmlessness, oneness, equality and co-operation.

May we realise to-day the universal brotherhood and fellowship of all cultures ! I now call upon the secretary to read a short report.

MAMTAZ (*reads*). The Club was started in 1947. It has branches throughout India. It has held several Unity Conferences in different cities. It creates a homely atmosphere for the representatives of different Communities, by arranging vegetarian, inter-communal meals, acceptable to all. It advocates inter-communal marriage and promotes the study of comparative culture. Its international centre is very active, as many people from other lands are coming to visit the new India. The men and women of different provinces come to stay in our hostels, and interchange ideas and views in Hindustani. (*All applaud.*)

PRESIDENT. Friends, we are delighted to have the representatives of the great faiths of India at this open forum. As already arranged, the speeches will be very short to leave sufficient time for discussion. I will ring this bell about ten seconds before the allotted time is up, for the convenience of the speakers. I do hope you will speak your minds frankly. Understanding is possible only when we are frank. I request Purohitji to tell us about the Hindu prophets.

PUROHITJI. Let us remember to-day Sri Rama, the ideal King, and Sri Krishna, who was at once a prophet, a statesman and a warrior. Their religion, Hinduism, is the mother of all religions, and its language, Sanskrit, is the oldest of all languages. The Aryans who produced these two prophets were the original inhabitants of India. A day will come when Hinduism will conquer the world. When all people accept the teachings of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, then there will be peace and brotherhood.

Gauri looks at Mamta.

PRESIDENT. Thank you, Purohitji. I call upon Mullah Saheb now.

MULLAH SAHEB. The Holy Prophet Mahammed—may peace be upon him—is the last prophet of the world. He combined the teachings of all the prophets who came before him. His faith, Islam, is a natural religion. It is the religion with which everyone is born. There is no caste or race in Islam. All the people in the world must become Muslims to have equality and peace. Only then can we have brotherhood.

PRESIDENT. Thank you, Mullah Saheb. Now we have the pleasure of hearing the revered Vicar.

THE VICAR. In the name of Lord Jesus, the only son of God, who gave up His life for the salvation of all, I speak to you. My faith is the only faith which speaks of love for God and man. Other faiths speak of duty alone. There will not be peace in

the world until all are converted to the faith of Jesus and have received His grace.

PRESIDENT. Thank you, revered sir. Now the Rabbi will tell us about the great prophets of his faith.

THE RABBI. I represent the Bene-Israel's of India, and am proud to say that no other faith has as many prophets as we have. We belong to the Chosen Race. Our prophets have preached universal peace and good will. We preach the one God without a second, the God of universal righteousness, and the brotherhood of all creatures. It is our duty to preserve the unique features of our faith by remaining aloof, so far as we can.

PRESIDENT. We are grateful to the Rabbi. Now the reverend Dastur will speak on his prophet.

DASTUR. Our prophet Zarathustra is the oldest prophet. He came to the world more than six thousand years before Christ. Although two heretics, Main and Mazdak, tried to distort his teachings, the faith of the great prophet remains intact with a small group of people in India. Our prophet was the first to tell mankind about one God and one humanity. It is only the true teachings of Zarathustra that can bring peace to the world.

PRESIDENT. We are thankful to the reverend Dastur. Will Sardar Sahab now tell us about the Gurus of the Sikhs?

SARDAR SAHEB. We Sikhs have ten prophets. Our first Guru taught us peace and love of God. But oppressions compelled us to change our way, and it was the tenth Guru who made us into a military nation. We are a strong and vigorous race, ready to defend our faith with our life's blood. One Sikh becomes as strong as a lakh of men, when he utters the name of our Guru Govind.

PRESIDENT. Thank you, Sardar Sahab. We are privileged now to hear about a prophet of nationalism from our distinguished friend, the Nationalist.

THE NATIONALIST. I am going to speak to you about the great prophet, Fichte, the prophet of nationalism. He was the finest product of the Indo-Germanic race, and India at this critical moment of her life can ill afford to forget him. Our Mother India must become the strongest of all nations. There was a time when we had a greater India in the Far East, and in Afghanistan. We must reconquer those territories! There has not been anything like Indian culture in the world. I appeal to the men and women of India to be heroic and to conquer the world culturally. (*President rings the bell.*) A day will come when every nation will bow down before India; and India, my Mother India, will lead Asia and the world. (*President rings the bell.*) My time is up, but my heart is full!

PRESIDENT. I thank my friend for his inspiring speech. Now our esteemed friend is going to tell us about another new prophet.

THE MARXIST. I am speaking of Karl Marx, the prophet of universal religion—

THE VICAR. Mr. President, we were not aware that you had a political motive in arranging this celebration. Karl Marx was not a prophet : he was a materialist.

PUROHITJI. I agree.

MULLAH SAHEB. I agree.

THE NATIONALIST. He was the greatest disturber of mankind !

PRESIDENT (*strongly*). You all know it is an open forum. Tolerance is the essence of true religion and democracy. I will deplore an India which is intolerant. I will deplore a faith which fears free opinion. Yes, Mr. Marxist, please go on.

THE MARXIST.—The universal religion that all creatures follow, the religion of food, clothing and shelter. Culture comes between breakfast and lunch, lunch and tea, tea and dinner, and dinner and breakfast. To me all faiths, born of mere speculation, act as an opium to the people. My prophet was a poor man. He was not a materialist in an ordinary sense. He said that matter is self-evolving, and that it is the extra-mental source of the universe.

All remain silent for a while.

DASTUR. This is interesting. If the source is extra-mental, then it is like our Ahura Mazda.

SARDAR SAHEB. It is like the True God of Baba Nanak.

PUROHITJI. You make me think ! Our Brahman is also extra-mental.

MULLAH SAHEB. My Allah is beyond the mind and beyond the world.

THE VICAR. Our Father in Heaven is transcendental.

THE RABBI. So is our Jehovah.

PRESIDENT. We have achieved a great thing at this celebration. We are agreed on a Common Source which may be called by various names—Matter, Idea, God, and so on. The Fellowship Club is grateful to you for joining in this celebration and making it a success. We have all spoken very frankly. Only in this way can we understand one another. All cultures must be free, and the fellowship of the cultures alone can bring peace and brotherhood.

In the middle of the speech the porter opens the door and looks for the secretary. Mamtaz quietly goes to him and whispers for a

while. *The porter goes out, giving Mamta a piece of paper which she hands to the president.*

PRESIDENT. Here is a somewhat alarming message from the porter. *(reads from the paper)* The situation is serious. This locality is attacked by the workers and the peasants who are on strike. They seem determined to capture the Government and destroy the lives and properties of the upper classes. This house is, however, safe, as there is a high wall all round it and the gate is closed.

THE NATIONALIST. We should hurry the proceedings, Mr. President, and leave this locality as soon as we can.

PRESIDENT. Yes, we should hurry up. Now, we have agreed that peace and brotherhood are the aims of all cultures. Brotherhood certainly demands equal sharing, and it can come only through non-violence. I feel sure that if the rich can act according to this principle, brotherhood will be established smoothly. All strikes will then cease, and there will be no violence. Power will be transferred to the people through consent. All-Prophets Day will be a glorious day in the history of India, if we succeed in this. *(Mamta quietly rises from her seat and distributes the copies of the resolution.)* The resolution will be moved now.

GAURI. I have great pleasure in moving this resolution :

“ Resolved that the following appeal be sent throughout the world to all people of the upper classes :

In the name of all prophets we appeal to—

(1) The Emperors, Kings, Princes and Tribal Chiefs to abdicate voluntarily in favour of the people.

(2) The industrialists and financiers to give up private property and the manipulation of money so that industry and finance can be organised for collective welfare and world peace.

(3) The land-owners in different countries to give up their unjust hold over land.

(4) The technocracy, the bureaucracy, the military class and the professional groups to accept a uniform salary system along with the manual workers.

(5) All churches, religious associations and leaders of great faiths to take initiative in establishing a just society.”

MAMTA. This appeal is in the true spirit of brotherhood, preached by all prophets, and I wholeheartedly second the resolution.

THE NATIONALIST *(screws up his copy of the resolution and throws it on the floor)*. I would not have come to your celebration, Mr. President, if I had known that you had such a sinister political purpose.

PRESIDENT (*calmly*). God and truth are our politics. Life is organic. You can never separate politics from culture.

MULLAH SAHEB. There is no caste in Islam, and there should not be class either. I support the resolution.

THE MARXIST. You are idle dreamers! Never will the ruling classes give up power through consent. We shall need force. But you may try your luck. I give my support to the resolution.

PUROHITJI. I want Rama-Rajya—a spiritual monarchy. I smell Communism in the whole of the resolution. I reject it. I believe in natural distinctions and the hierarchy of castes.

GAURI. But your Gita says that the ideal man sees the Self in all and all in the Self. If you apply this to society, you come to the system for which we are working.

PUROHITJI (*bitterly*). Even the Devil can quote scriptures.

PRESIDENT. Order, order, please!

THE VICAR. Christianity believes in voluntary communism. I support the resolution.

SARDAR SAHEB. Nanak says that we must be at one with the lowly. I support the resolution.

DASTUR. I represent a very small community. I should like to be neutral.

THE RABBI. I belong to a still smaller community. I should like to do the same.

PRESIDENT. I find the majority in favour of the appeal. The resolution is passed. We will send it throughout the world. Now the last item is the collection. Any contributions will be gratefully received. Who is going to collect?

SARDAR SAHEB. I shall be glad to take the collection.

He takes the collection. The Nationalist and Purohitji do not put anything in the plate. While Sardar Saheb remains standing with the plate, the Porter opens the door, shouting "We shall be killed, we shall be killed." He enters hastily, and, obstructed by the carpet, falls down. The plate with the money slips down from the hands of Sardar Saheb, who stands non-plussed.

PORTER. Our block of houses is attacked and surrounded. Thousands of people! We are doomed! Oh, who will look after my wife and children!

The noise of a crowd is heard from a distance. The Porter, frightened, goes under the table.

PRESIDENT. I request you all to be calm. (*pause*) Are all my ideas in vain? How I dreamt that the teachings of

all the prophets would bring everyone to the same level and there would be a peaceful India of the common people.

The noise of the crowd is heard again. It is louder, though still distant.

THE VICAR (*kneels down*). Oh Father, we resign ourselves to Thee at this hour when our lives are at stake. Jesus Christ, our Lord!

PUROHITJI (*nervously*). The Self is not cut by the sword, not burnt by fire, not wetted by water, not dried by air.

MULLAH SAHEB. May Allah give us strength to defend ourselves herioccally! (*remains thoughtful*)

SARDAR SAHEB (*tightens his cuffs and draws his sword*). Let them come, I will show them!

DASTUR (*looks upward*). Oh, Mazda, if I die, may my body be placed on the Tower of Silence and eaten by the birds!

THE RABBI. Oh Jehovah, may I remain calm! (*closes his eyes*)

THE MARXIST. I have no God to pray to. The reality of the situation is my God. I pity the workers who defy their own leaders, break the united front and bring ruin to themselves by premature violence.

Distant shots are heard.

PORTER (*from under the table*). Now we are lost!

THE NATIONALIST (*takes out a pistol from his pocket*). These rats! They will be taught a lesson! (*goes towards the door*)

PORTER (*comes from under the table and takes out a pistol*). I have another with me. The Sheth left it with me to defend his property. Let the rats come! (*goes forward. Sardar Saheb brandishes his sword.*)

MAMTAZ. Don't be foolish. You cannot hope to cope with thousands of people with two pistols and a sword. They are well armed. They are determined to destroy the ruling class. Why not face them bravely, and die nobly? Why not tell them about the appeal we are sending out, and the possibility of a peaceful transfer of power?

GAURI. It is glorious to die for a principle. It is a sin to die like cowards. For untold ages our class, the rich and the powerful, have exploited the people. We have been responsible for famine, pestilence, dishonour, insult and bloodshed in all periods of history. We looted their lands, made them slaves and serfs, and taught some of them to oppress their own people by becoming our policemen and soldiers. If we are killed

to-day, it will be an atonement. By our death, let us wash away the sins of our ancestors. Let us die bravely. Do not all faiths tell us about the free Spirit? Do not they all say that this physical life is nothing? Why should we falter then? The use of arms will be foolish both as a principle and a policy. We have a better part to play. Give me the pistols.

The Nationalist and the Porter hand over their pistols to Gauri, who puts them on the table. Sardar Saheb puts the sword back in its sheath. Noises are heard from the street.

PORTER. My God, my God!

MAMTAZ. Shut up, you coward! Gauri, make two peace flags at once with handkerchiefs and sticks.

GAURI. A brilliant idea. We are going to face them—

MAMTAZ. Two sticks, please. Purohitji, yours—Mullah Saheb, yours, too, please.

They give her their sticks. The crowd shouts from the street, "Victory to the people! Victory to the people!"

GAURI. Handkerchiefs—handkerchiefs—

All put their hands into their pockets but cannot find their handkerchiefs. At last Mullah Saheb, Sardar Saheb, Purohitji, the Vicar, the Dastur and the Rabbi bring out handkerchiefs of different colours, and say, "Here they are, here they are," and give them to Gauri.

GAURI (takes the handkerchiefs). Not coloured ones—
(throws them away)

MAMTAZ. White ones—white ones—

The Marxist and the President take out two white handkerchiefs from their pockets and give them to Mamta.

GAURI. Pins—drawing pins, Mamta—

PORTER (pathetically). There are many in the other room, but I can't go to fetch them.

MAMTAZ. Keep quiet. (takes pins from the attache case. Gauri and Mamta make two peace flags by pinning white handkerchiefs to the sticks.)

GAURI. Where is the appeal?

PRESIDENT. Here it is. (gives Gauri and Mamta each a copy) I am proud of my secretaries.

MAMTAZ (with a little smile). Grandpa, the hour has come.

Shouts and blows on the main gate are heard. President quietly goes and shuts the shutters.

INDIA THROUGH THE AGES

MAMTAZ. Friends, let us be calm. Let us have faith in human nature.

PRESIDENT. Let us die calmly. I leave my dream to posterity. May all power come to the people through consent ! Peace !

MAMTAZ. Let the blood of Hindus and Muslims shed here cement the unity of the two communities for ever.

GAURI. Let all violence cease from to-day. Let all peoples be free. Let India show the ideal of peace, not to lead the world but to serve it.

Shots are fired at the house and the main gate collapses. The crowd shouts, "Victory to the people, victory to the people."

GAURI. Be ready, Mamtaaz.

They stand ready, each with a flag and an appeal in her hand. All look at them with admiration.

THE VICAR. Noble Christians !

PUROHITJI. Devout Hindus !

MULLAH SAHEB. Ideal Muslims !

DASTUR. Enlightened Parsees !

SARDAR SAHEB. Heroic Sikhs !

THE RABBI. Brave Jews !

THE NATIONALIST. Valiant Indians !

PORTER. Two Goddesses !

THE MARXIST. Non-violent Communists of the New World !

PRESIDENT. My glorious children ! May you be blessed !
(comes to them and blesses them by touching their heads. The crowd breaks the front door and rushes into the house.)

GAURI. Come, Mamtaaz.

MAMTAZ. Come, Gauri.

Blows are heard on the doors of the rooms downstairs. All except Mamtaaz and Gauri remain standing calmly and quietly. Gauri and Mamtaaz, with flags and appeals, go to the doors. Rapid knocks on the doors of the room.

GAURI *(half turning back)*. It may be a noble death !

MAMTAZ *(half turning back)*. It may be a noble victory ! Who cares ?

Stones are thrown at the windows. Repeated blows are heard on the doors. Gauri and Mamtaaz slightly open the doors. The edges of two red flags are seen through the openings. They touch the white flags.

CURTAIN